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9 March –
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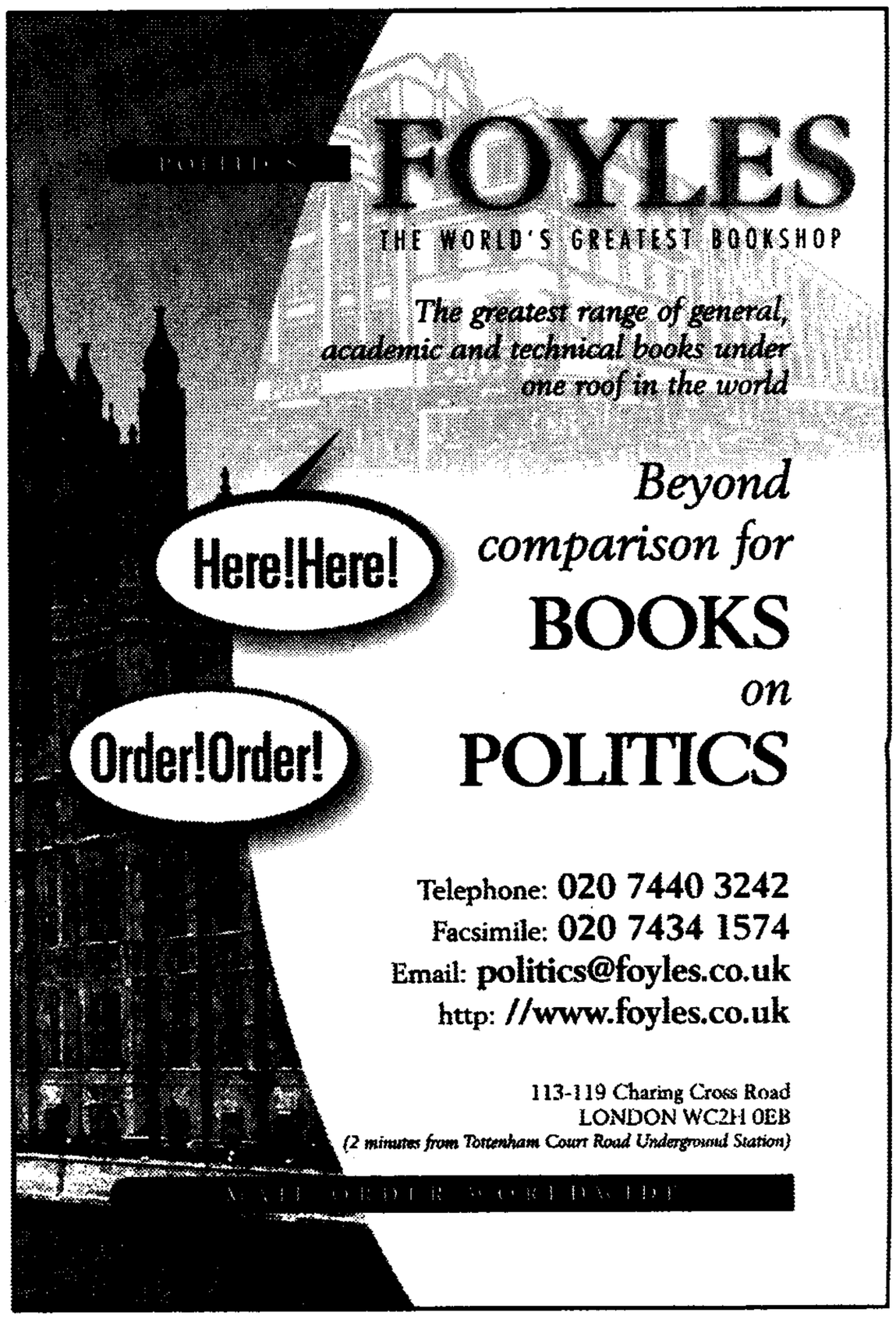

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# Gnome

I AM glad to announce a truce in the unseemly war of words between Rothergnome Newspapers and Sir Dirty Desmond's Express Group. Following a friendly meeting in Soho's Filth Street Restaurant between Mr Strobes and Mr Desmond's right-hand man, Mr Eddie (Edward) Sleaze, Senior Managing Editor of Northern and Shellsuit Publishing, we have come to the following agreement:

The Daily Sexpress will not again mention the story that upset my wife, Lady Rothergnome, about my relationship with Ms Rita Chevrolet.

In return, Rothergnome Newspapers will make no further reference to the fact that Sir Dirty's publishing empire includes such titles as *Readers' Grandmothers*, *Asian Readers' Aunties* and the *Daily Sexpress*.

This is a solemn and binding agreement to take effect immediately.

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## HAGUE AT THE SEXPRESS

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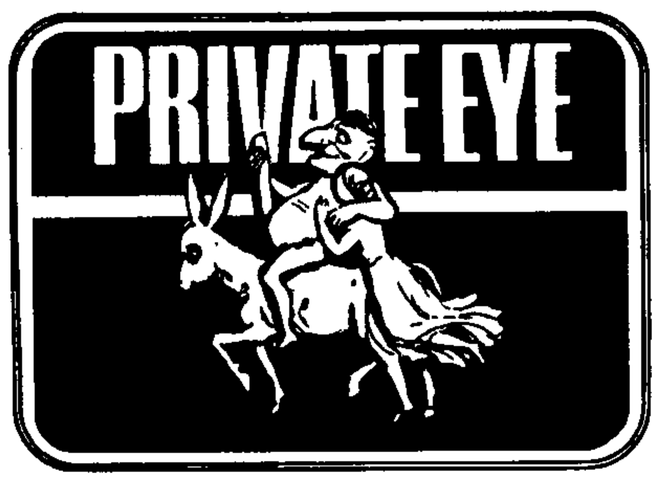


***The magazine that gives you Foot and Mirth!***

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**IT IS just over a year since a "close friend" of minor actress Sally Farmiloe told the *Mirror* that she had been dumped by Jeffrey Archer after their affair became public knowledge. "Sally was devastated to think he can treat her like this... How can a person that has shared so many happy moments and intimate memories humiliate another person in a way like this?"**

Archer may now be asking the same question about Farmiloe: over no fewer than five pages of the *News of the Screws*, she reveals more than anyone might wish to know about their "romps" and "sex games". At the end of this epic unburdening, without a hint of irony, Farmiloe grumbles that "Jeffrey betrays all those close to him in the end."

Unlike our own dear Sally, of course. When the *Daily Star* exposed her affair with Archer in December 1999, a distraught Farmiloe announced that she was "consulting my lawyers" about this terrible invasion of her privacy. Last February she wrote an angry letter to Lord Gnome (*Eye* 995) denying that she would ever cooperate with a tabloid, or that she had helped the *Star* with its story. "Disgraceful lies," wailed Sally. "Under the circumstances I think a grovelling apology would be in order." Our reply was a brief: *"No. Ed."*

But Sally did get an apology and hefty damages from the *Mail on Sunday*, which ran what purported to be an interview by hackette Alexis Parr, an old friend. As Sally's lawyer David Price explained, the piece "contained information that Farmiloe had given Ms Parr in confidence or that she had overheard at Farmiloe's home". Sally was "very upset" by the implication that she would give interviews about her special friendship with milord Archer.

The *MoS* case was settled as recently as last November. Even more recently – when approached by a *Daily Mail* hack at the Bafta awards two weeks ago – she was still repeating her pious refrain: "I can't talk about Jeffrey."

One can only assume it was an entirely different Sally Farmiloe babbling on about suspenders and stocking-tops in last Sunday's *Screws*.

PS: According to Sally Farmiloe, Archer made love to her on the back seat of his red Mini, in a Masterpark car park in Mayfair and on the floor of an upstairs room at the Café Royal. In Archer's latest book of short stories, published a year ago, one character boasts of having sex with his mistress "on the back seat of my Mercedes in that NCP car park in Mayfair, the service lift in Harrods, the loo at the Caprice". Some stories in the book are marked with an asterisk to indicate that they're based on real incidents, but not this one. Pure fiction, obviously.

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**DESPITE their huge lead in the opinion polls, Labour apparatchiks are becoming strangely jittery about the general election. So much so that Alastair Campbell was despatched on a secret mission to the Grey Lubyanka two weeks ago to suck up to porn baron Richard Desmond, who is now regarded as one of the party's most important allies.**

After much effusive praise for the "new style" which Dirty Des had brought to the *Express*, Campbell pleaded grovellingly for the paper to support Labour during the campaign. "Do you think," he asked, "you could persuade Posh and Becks to say they'll vote Labour?"

Desmond laughed so much he nearly swallowed his cigar. "Sorry, Alastair, I don't think it can be done, even if I ask very nicely." Why not? "Victoria's a Thatcherite."

To compound Campbell's misery, a few days later Desmond invited William Hague to the Grey Lubyanka for a friendly chat. Can a top-level summit between Hague and Posh Spice be far behind?

**THE Sunday papers were unequivocal. "Whitehall Inquiry Finds Against Mandelson," the *Sunday Times*'s splash announced, revealing that the Hammond inquiry would challenge Mandy's recollections of the Hinduja affair and criticise him for misleading the prime minister. This was echoed by a front-page story in the *Sunday Telegraph*: "Hinduja Inquiry Fails to Clear Mandelson's Name."**

That was on 25 February. But last Sunday, just one week later, the *Telegraph* had a startlingly different splash headline: "Peter Mandelson is Cleared of Lying by Official Inquiry." It was accompanied by a photo of the Prince of Darkness walking his dogs and looking rather pleased with himself – as well he might.

Sir Anthony Hammond had sent him extracts from the draft report as a courtesy. Could these by any chance have been the source of the pro-Mandy stories? And did the anti-Mandy pieces of the previous weekend emanate from sources not a million miles from the home office?

We may never know. When unpublished official documents appear in the press, Downing Street usually orders a leak inquiry forthwith. But there has been no mention of any such investigation this time. Why should this be?

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**SIMON HEFFER'S FOOT & MOUTH DIARY**

*New Statesman*

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**THE police are law and order officers paid by the taxpayer and controlled by the home office, so obviously they cannot be expected to guard their own premises. That job needs to be done by private enterprise, which is why Lancashire police are spending £450,000 over the next three years to bring in private security firms to guard police stations.**

When home office minister Paul Boateng admitted in the Commons that "no specific guidance is issued to the police on such matters", Gordon Prentice, Labour MP for Pendle, asked: "Where are the criminals who want to break into police headquarters staffed by police officers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year?" And: "Will Group 4 be guarding the soldiers at Preston barracks?"

Neither question got a proper answer.

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*"It's aimed at people who were born yesterday"*

# Street of Shame

**AFTER the recent scandal at a north London hospital which employed a cleaner with TB, undercover *News of the World* hack Paul McMullan applied for a job as a porter at the same hospital. Sure enough, he was taken on without being given any health checks or basic hygiene training. Great scoop!**

Not for long, alas. When MacMullan arrived for his first day at work he was teamed up with a porter who had joined a week or so earlier and would show him the ropes. To his consternation, he recognised his new colleague as... an undercover hack from the *Sunday Mirror!*

**WHEN he's not hosting self-congratulatory soirées for royalty, editors and soap stars, press complaints commission chairman Lord Wakeham claims that his watchdog has sharp teeth and a genuine sense of conscience. Why, then, have those teeth not yet bitten the ankle of *Sunday People* editor Neil "Wolfman" Wallis, who recently used fake documents to launch a campaign against the release of Jamie Bulger's killers?**

The bogus "world exclusive" was accompanied by a blizzard of media appearances by the oafish Wolfman, designed to raise his profile as a high-minded, crusading editor. The fact that his campaign was based on a blatant forgery emerged during the unsuccessful appeal court action brought by Bulger's father. But the court didn't explore who had forged the documents, how they had come to reach the *People* or whether the newspaper paid for the fakes before rushing into print.

Meanwhile Wallis is continuing his campaign against the release of Venables and Thompson, but has not informed his readers that the original story was pure fiction. Nor, of course, has he apologised.

Not long ago, editors would have fallen on their swords or been fired after such a shaming *debacle*. (Especially since this is only the latest in a series of Wolfman cock-ups. *Eye* readers may recall Wallis' front-page splash two years ago revealing that Anthea Turner was pregnant with Grant Bovey's baby. More than 250,000 copies had been printed before he realised that there was one small problem with the story – ie it wasn't true – and had to restart the print-run with a new front page. Hence his alternative nickname of "Tarantino": his paper is fiction and it gets pulped.) However, given the indulgence of Trinity Mirror bosses towards Wallis's close chum and colleague Piers Morgan, no one at Canary Wharf is surprised by their deafening silence.

Outrage has so far been confined to the *Grauniad*, which ran a scathing editorial two weeks ago arguing that the PCC should have launched its own inquiry into the affair as a matter of public interest. Fat chance – at least so long as the leading lights of the PCC's code committee include a certain Neil "Wolfman" Wallis.

**IN THE second week of his libel action over an article in the *Daily Mail* describing him as a miser, Sir Alan Sugar was asked why he did not use his own money to buy players for his football club Tottenham Hotspur.**

The court report in the *Times* on 13 February recorded Sugar's angry reply: "Viscount Rothermere, who has a £7.4 billion fortune, is also capable of buying a new printing press, but you don't go to him and say, 'Bung us a few quid to provide us one'. It's absolutely ludicrous to suggest something like that."

A report in the previous day's London *Evening Standard*, however, chose a different extract from Sugar's response: "He said it would be the same as Virgin asking Sir Richard Branson to lend them money to buy an aeroplane." Surely the unnamed *Standard* reporter who penned the account of proceedings was not trying to avoid any mention of Viscount Rothermere, whose company, Associated Newspapers, owns not only the *Daily Mail*, but also the *Evening Standard*?

## JUST FANCY THAT!

"A note of exaggeration has been heard in some reporting [of foot and mouth disease]... Preposterous suggestions have been made, for example that the general election should be deferred."

— *Guardian* editorial, 28 February

"Unless the plague is quelled in the next 10 days, it should be not merely possible but axiomatic that the May [election] date is abandoned."

— Hugo Young, *Guardian*, 1 March

**THE *Guardian's* architecture section has come up with a brilliant new idea for a column. Each week "Wonders and blunders" asks a leading figure in the world of architecture and the arts to nominate their favourite and least favourite buildings.**

On 26 January co-designer of the London Eye, Julia Barfield, chose for her wonder Palm House, Kew, and for her blunder Mondial House, a British Telecom building on the north bank of the Thames in London. On 12 February it was Chris Smith's turn to nominate Bevin Court, London, and Elephant and Castle as his wonder and blunder. Surely there is no connection between the *Grauniad's* inspired new column and a column which has run in the trade journal *Building* since 1994 entitled, er, "Wonders and blunders".

By complete coincidence the *Building* column interviewed Julia Barfield on 12 January, when she also selected Mondial House as her blunder, while in December 1994 then shadow heritage secretary Chris Smith featured in the column with exactly the same choice of wonder and blunder.

**RICHARD "I don't do Dutch" Desmond may shortly be sued by Lord Hollick, the man who sold him the *Express* newspapers.**

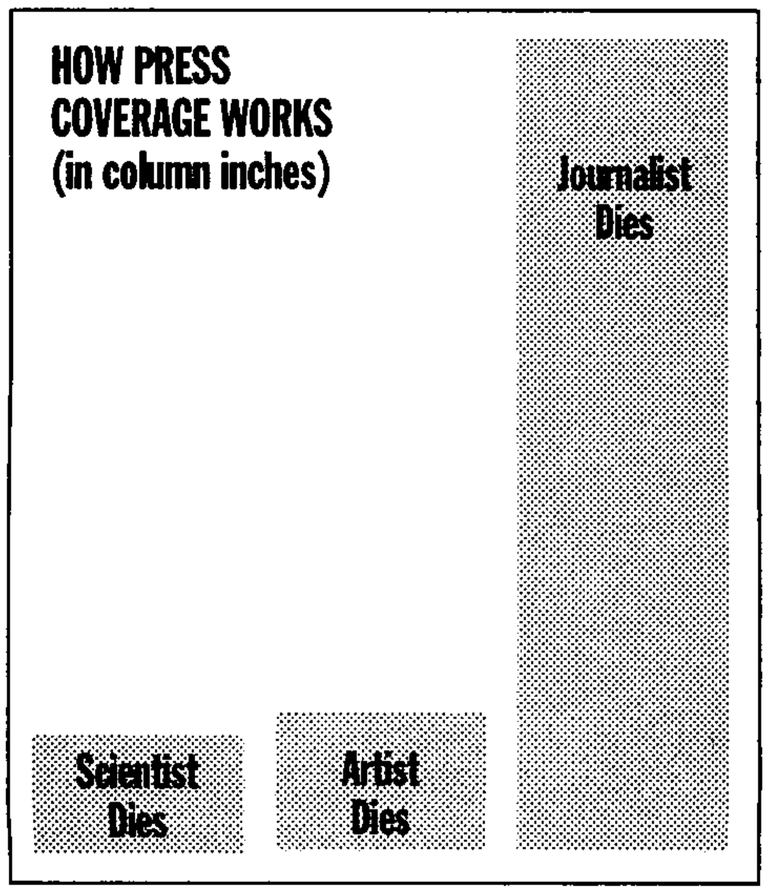
When Dirty Des bought the titles from Hollick, it was part of the agreement that he could move *OK!* magazine into the Grey Lubyanka, Hollick's building on Blackfriars bridge. But there was a strict prohibition against Desmond relocating any of his porn titles there. Desmond has now apparently breached this agreement by moving *Asian Babes* and *Big Uns* into offices on the fourth floor.

The keen feminist Lady Hollick finds these porn titles particularly disgusting and is now insisting that her husband should call in m'learned friends.

**"WIN DIAMONDS WORTH £15,000," the *Sunday Express*'s front page announced excitedly on 25 February. "See page 35 of the Enjoy! Section."**

Readers turning to page 35 of Enjoy! found a rather different message: "Win a millennium diamond pendant necklace worth £499."

It seems that even *Sunday Express* editor "Mad" Mike Pilgrim was unhappy with the misleading front-page blurb, which had been chosen by Richard Desmond himself. But he had the good sense not to remonstrate too forcefully. "I disagree," he told the boss, "but it's your train set, Richard."



*"This looks like the work of the Real ITN"*

**RED faces at the London *Evening Standard*, where coverage of the Selby train disaster was marred by an awful juxtaposition.**

Underneath a page of photographs of mangled metal, through which rescuers were seen searching for surivivors, sat an ad for the new series of *ER* on Channel 4. "URGENT DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT" shouted the ad's copy line with appalling irony.

## JUST FANCY THAT 2

"Since when have internet companies ever told the truth? Take for instance, the liberal over-use of the term `hit'... The PR following the Madonna gig webcast did just that, with many media outlets falling for the touted 9m user 'audience'figure when insiders said there was no way any more than 25,000 people were able to view the webcast."

— *Guardian*, 26 February.

"Madonna's gig received 4.5m consecutive streams [audio and video connections] during the concert, rising to 10.8m over the two-week period following the show."

— *Guardian*, 26 February.

**THE world of Sally Jockstrap has been rocked to its foundations (*writes E. I. Addio, our man with the copy of Asian Babes*) by a bust-up between two of Fleet Street's top sports hackettes.**

The cause of the trouble is the autobiography of athlete Denise Lewis, which has a £250,000 advance and is to be ghost-written by Alison Kervin, the highly regarded rugby correspondent of the *Times*. A surprising choice, since Denise Lewis is a columnist on the rival *Daily Telegraph*. She considered several *Torygraph* hacks for the job, but turned them all down except for Paul Hayward. Then she decided she wanted a woman to write it. Although the *Telegraph* proposed its own star hackette Sue Mott, Lewis decided Kervin would be more "sensitive".

Cue apoplectic rage from the *Daily Telegraph* and Sue Mott, who gave vent to her feelings in a paint-stripping phone call to Kervin. It is no doubt coincidence that Denise Lewis's contract with the *Telegraph* has now ended – and that when she gave a press conference last week to announce a £750,000 sponsorship deal with Nike not a word about it appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, which had previously reported her every cough and splutter.

While Mott seethes Kervin is prospering mightily. Lewis's agent, Jonathan Marks, is so impressed with her work that he has offered her a contract to do three further biographies of sports stars on his books – including two who write columns for rival papers to the *Times*. Kervin has also written a bonkbuster novel called *Rugby Studs*, which is due out in time for the Lions' tour and is apparently going to cause mayhem in the rugby establishment. Perhaps the *Torygraph* will ask Sue Mott to review it, as a consolation prize.

**IN *Eye* 1022 we mistakenly said that former *Guardian* picture editor Eamonn McCabe was on the panel of judges of the *What the Papers Say* awards 2000.**

In fact as a former *WTPS* presenter, McCabe was one of those who selected the nominees for the awards.

# HACKWATCH

## Small Circulation War... Not Many Dead

**IT WAS the Fleet Street conflict everyone had dreaded. All police leave was cancelled and the St John's ambulance brigade was put on standby. For a few days the world held its breath. But then the two sides drew back from the brink. For the benefit of posterity, Lord Gnome's team of military historians has compiled the first full account of how the Old Contemptibles took on the Desmond Rats.**

**9 December 2000:** The *Daily Mail* fires its first salvo against the new owner of the *Daily Express* with a stern editorial and a two-page spread headed "Desmond the Degrader". At the same time it sends letters to *Express* readers warning them to lock up their daughters, as the paper has fallen into the clutches of a "pornographer".

**30 December:** The *Express* carries a letter from one Harry Williams of Staffordshire. "I have just finished my first week of reading the *Daily Express* and it has been very enjoyable," he reveals. "I used to have the *Daily Mail* delivered to my door but I grew tired of its tirade of features and editorials."

**15 January 2001:** The *Daily Mail* boasts that its circulation is soaring. "In contrast, the *Daily Express*, in its first full month under the ownership of pornography baron Richard Desmond, saw circulation fall by more than 33,000." *Express* readers are urged to defect to the *Mail*, a "family newspaper" which "represents all the qualities and values you hold dear". Meanwhile, newsagents are offered a £5 reward for every customer they can persuade to switch from the *Express* to the *Mail*.

**20 January:** The *Express* retaliates with yet more letters from new converts, some of them apparently won over by the new focus on such fascinating figures as Posh and Becks. "We had been *Daily Mail* readers for over 25 years," writes Malcolm Craggs of East Yorkshire, "but we began to dislike the many serialisations of biographies by people we did not find interesting. A couple of months ago we decided enough was enough. Since then we have been happy *Daily Express* readers."

**27 January:** And still they keep coming. Another new *Express* fan, Andrew Nye of Bedfordshire, explains that he switched allegiance because "the *Mail* was working towards the objective of destroying the whole infrastructure of the country".

**18 February:** "Concerns are mounting about the boardroom standards at Daily Mail and General Trust," the *Sunday Express* reports, claiming that shareholders, pension advisers and corporate governance experts "are unhappy about the way DMGT is run". The *Mail* retaliates by offering newsagents yet more generous incentives if they can persuade *Express* readers to defect.

**20 February:** It's war! A furious piece in the *Express* declares that "the *Daily Wail* is spending millions of its shareholders' money in a futile attempt to beat off the rejuvenated *Express*. It is also plumbing the depths by spreading endless lies about the *Express* and attempting to undermine our distribution system."

**21 February:** Out come the heavy artillery. "For decades the *Daily Mail* has preached piously about patriotism and family values. But what is the truth about the aristocrats behind it?" A two-page spread in the *Express* supplies the answers: "One believed that Hitler had the right policies for Britain. His grandson thought so much of his family that he kept a mistress for 15 years and drove his sad, lonely wife to drink." The piece ends with an exhortation ("Show this article to a *Daily Mail* reader") and a warning. "Tomorrow: read about the new hypocrite at the *Mail*."

**22 February:** "He preaches about single parents, so why does his own illegitimate son have to live with his mother on the other side of the world?" The target this time is the *Mail*'s current owner, 33-year-old Lord Rothermere, who impregnated a girlfriend 13 years ago but is now married to someone else. Meanwhile the *Mail* launches a new attempt to woo *Express* readers by offering them free copies. A dummy page to be wrapped round each copy features a picture of a 78-year-old woman posing naked on one of Desmond's websites, and advises *Express* readers to try "a cleaner alternative".

**23 February:** "The *Daily Wail*, preaching its gospel of prejudice and doom, continues its slide. Despite its relentless and hugely expensive campaign against the rejuvenated *Express*, the *Mail* is fast becoming the *Daily Fail*... We are positive where the *Mail* is negative, we are joyful where they are hand-wringing, we are outward-looking where they are parochial." Further into the paper is a positive, joyful and outward-looking feature headed "Hate Mail", which explains "why more and more high profile figures don't have a good word to say about Britain's most spiteful paper". The critics include Richard Branson, Michael Flatley and Vanessa Feltz (who, funnily enough, has recently signed a lucrative contract with the *Express*).

**25 February:** It's all over. Both *Sunday Business* and *Scotland on Sunday* reveal that the *Mail*'s managing director Murdo MacLennan has sued for peace at a "secret" lunch in the Howard Hotel with Richard Desmond. The source for this story (though they don't mention it) is their publisher Andrew Neill, who happened to be lunching in the same hotel, spotted the two men together and drew the obvious conclusion. *Sunday Business* claims that the *Mail* has promised to stop mentioning Desmond's record as a pornographer if he'll stop running pieces about Lord Rothermere's love life. "It is understood Lord Rothermere's wife, Claudia, had been particularly upset by an *Express* article about her husband's illegitimate child."

**26 February:** Led by Roy Greenslade in the *Grauniad*, Fleet Street agrees unanimously that the *Mail* has effectively capitulated to spare the blushes of its proprietor's wife. Victory for plucky little Desmond! Defeat for the Goliath of Associated Newspapers!

It isn't necessarily so, however. For one thing, Claudia Rothermere didn't even see the *Express* piece about her husband. For another, the "peace summit" at the Howard Hotel was not the first encounter between Murdo MacLennan and Richard Desmond. The *Eye* can reveal that they have had two previous lunches at the Savoy Grill, well before there was even a hint that the *Express* might run anything about the Rothermere love-child.

There is a far more likely explanation for their meetings. The *Express*'s circulation is plummeting under the new junta, few of whom know anything about national newspapers, and Desmond has neither the money nor the inclination to invest the vast sums required to challenge the *Mail*. Offloading the *Daily* and *Sunday Express* to Associated Newspapers (which tried to buy the titles last year) would give him a huge wad of cash and leave him with the newspaper he actually wanted, the *Daily Star*. As an Associated source says: "They think there's a chance he'll sell – *that's* the real explanation for the truce".

Which, of course, would give Associated Newspapers a monopoly control of the middle market, if the government allowed it to go through. Some defeat, eh?

## PLAIN ENGLISH AWARDS

***"No, no. I don't feel what I did was morally reprehensible, except I felt very significant guilt about the unhappiness that I'd caused. So I suppose in the calculation of responsibility, I have to log that in the deficit."***

— Chris Woodhead,
stickler for high standards in schools,
interviewed in the *Telegraph*

*"I miss the horse, Brian"*

# Legal News

**HOME secretary Jack Straw's blast against lawyers who cost too much would sound more convincing were his government not burning bank notes by the barrel load in Northern Ireland to fund Lord Saville's Bloody Sunday inquiry.**

While Ulster Unionist MP Willie Ross has been trying to find out how much these proven lawyers have been claiming in expenses, the wider figures reveal what kind of bargain British taxpayers are getting for their money.

Tony Blair announced the setting up of the tribunal under Lord Saville on 29 January 1998. By 1 January this year it had already cost taxpayers £33,834,904.

Ross asked Stormont security minister Adam Ingram to provide a breakdown of what the lawyers were claiming. But Ingram replied: "The figures for monies paid to solicitors and barristers cannot be readily provided separately, nor can the payments for their professional services be separated from other expenses."

Really? Since these lawyers are all self-employed, how on earth do they manage to prepare their accounts accurately for the Inland Revenue?

**THE ranks of the great and the good who attended the memorial service of legendary libel barrister George Carman included *Rumpole of the Bailey* creator John Mortimer, who took his seat in a pew immediately behind fellow guest, Lord Irvine of Lairg.**

When Mortimer's neighbour commented: "There's an awful lot of lawyers here", the lawyer-turned-author provoked much hilarity with his reply: "Well, we should have a whip round for the Labour party." One person who did not appear to be laughing, however, was the lord chancellor sitting in front.

**IF THE lord chancellor needs a little light reading to take his mind off the row over his letter soliciting donations to the Labour party from lawyers, he could do worse than scour the guidance on outside activities for judges and QCs issued by his own department last June.**

These guidelines explicitly state: "A Judge must expect to forgo any kind of political activity and also any other activity which could make undue demands on his time. He should be on his guard against circumstances arising in which his involvement in any outside activity might be seen to cast doubt on his judicial impartiality or conflict with his judicial office."

The lord chancellor is, of course, not only the head of the judiciary, but also a judge.

**"IT IS never healthy for the rule of law for lawyers to be criticised for doing their job," said Nicholas Blake QC, after his exposure (first in the *Eye*) for taking a whopping brief fee to lend the respectability of the Matrix "human rights" chambers to the racist military regime in Fiji.**

Ooh er! Somehow forgetting that the cab rank excuse (*"principle", shurely? Ed*) for representing any client, however odious, does not apply outside the UK, Blake protests that any client "has a right to representation, however unpopular or unattractive the cause may appear to be".

Fair enough; but then surely Matrix should ditch its boasts about human rights – or Blake should donate his 30 pieces of Fijian silver to charity. Meanwhile his Matrix colleague Claire Montgomery, of Pinochet fame, has escaped the flak flying in Blake's direction. Although she was initially involved in the Fiji case, Matrix said she dropped out because of a clash with a lengthy trial. They said there was no truth whatever in the suggestion that the deeply, er, "traditional" Fijian chiefs who had initially demanded the Chilean dictator's lawyer changed their mind when they discovered she was a woman.

**TURNING up for work despite threats and being ordered out by Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's chief justice Anthony Gubbay is braver than his fellow Commonwealth judges and barristers.**

Last year they pledged to hold their international law conference in Zimbabwe to show support for Gubbay's attempts to keep the courts independent. Unfortunately the deteriorating situation and mounting tension in Zimbabwe have forced them to opt instead for the safety and excitement of Melbourne.

**COMETH the hour, cometh the man... Agriculture minister Nick Brown's stock may be rising as Tony Blair relies on him to steer the government through the foot and mouth crisis, but it was not always so. Older readers will recall how the Dear Leader ignominiously exiled Brown in his first big reshuffle after coming to power.**

Brown was happily ensconced as government chief whip when Blair exiled him to agriculture, fisheries and food – one down from the Northern Ireland office in the Siberia stakes. His crime? The Dear Leader believed he was far too close to that other Brown, the brooding chancellor, Gordon. Indeed, Brown N. had been Brown G.'s unofficial campaign manager during that brief interlude between the death of John Smith and the Granita restaurant deal at which Gordy graciously agreed to step aside for Tony.

Nowadays, though, Blair really needs his man with the wellingtons. He himself doesn't know one end of a pig from another, and his interest in the great outdoors extends to having had a CCTV camera placed in a Chequers outhouse so the Blair children can watch a pair of owls nesting.

And Brown is earning plaudits in his party by the simple device of not being entirely useless. One Labour MP watching his response to a new outbreak of the disease was overheard to mutter: "Thank f**k JP's not at MAFF" – "JP" being English for John Prescott, the foot-in-mouth deputy prime minister.

"Nick's stock keeps on rising," says another MP, "so long as he doesn't stop Tony from having an election on 3 May by banning canvassers from the countryside."

**HOW did the chummy relationship between former chief inspector of schools Chris Woodhead and his Labour ministers end so abruptly?**

The answer lies in Woodhead's stroppy performance at the Commons education committee last autumn in which he tried to justify his arrogant response to criticism from the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE).

His sour insults to Dr Evan Harris, Liberal Democrat MP for Oxford East, drew from the committee chairman Barry Sheerman a stern rebuke for "your flip remarks". He came under fiercer criticism over his treatment of the CRE.

When a report commissioned by the CRE criticised Ofsted for its complacent approach to racial matters, Woodhead, who had refused to be interviewed by CRE researchers, denounced the commission's report as "shoddy".

When Sheerman criticised Woodhead again, the chief inspector replied primly: "You are entitled to your view." To which the chairman responded: "Absolutely. And you are accountable to my committee."

These sharp exchanges with one of the mildest and most loyal senior Labour MPs finally cooked the chief inspector's goose. Not long after the committee published some highly critical remarks about Woodhead, he decided he had better scuttle before he was pushed and clambered on to the *Torygraph*.

**THE people of Stevenage had a special treat on Valentine's day: a four-page supplement in their local newspaper, the *Herald*, paid for by, and devoted to, their local MP, the still-ravishing Barbara Follett.**

In an extraordinary piece of vanity publishing la Follett's message was a trifle confused as she waffled: "It is hard to believe that I have been doing this job for three and three quarter years. Sometimes it feels like only three and three quarter months. Other times it feels like three and three quarter decades."

Babs must have decided she could better convey her appeal to the electorate via pictures of her own doll-like visage. There can be no other reason why no fewer than 16 photos of her adorn the pages of this heart-warming supplement.

**WHO regulates the regulators? Treasury minister Andrew Smith has found the answer.**

In mid February he published an *Independent efficiency review of utility regulators*, looking into the work of Ofgem, Oftel, Ofwat and the Office of the Rail Regulator. The "independent reviewer" was none other than W.S. Atkins, which works extensively for regulated firms like Railtrack, British Gas, British Telecom, National Power and others.

The chairman of W.S Atkins, Alan Rudge, is a former chairman of BT; and his company recommended that the top staff at the regulators should get more pay and the bottom staff should get less. W.S. Atkins itself sticks by this formula, though not always with happy results: imperfect investment in training and supporting staff left the firm with a £30,000 fine in 1998 after it dealt clumsily with asbestos in a Gloucester school.

Meanwhile energy regulator Ofgem has put out a press release saying the "task" of regulators is "protecting customers' interests". To this end it has appointed two new customer-friendly directors: Nick Simpson, who has spent the last 24 years in electricity and gas supply and rose to be trading development manager of the gas and electricity supply company Centrica; and John Scott, director of engineering at the National Grid Company, where he has run the new control centre in Berkshire.

The climate of opinion at "customer-friendly" Ofgem will be extremely congenial to both men. The new managing director, Richard Ramsey, "has gained extensive experience in corporate finance and investment management" at Hill Samuel, BZW and Ivory and Sime. Indeed, at BZW, he led the team that advised the Scottish office on the £3bn flotation of the two Scottish electricity companies.

**HOME secretary Jack Straw, keen to out-Widdecombe the Tories, has announced yet more plans for tougher sentences for the supposed 100,000 career criminals, or persistent offenders as he calls them, who keep committing offences.**

Along with this "in jail for longer" philosophy Straw also announced a more sensible strategy called "custody plus" for those serving less than a year. After a period of custody they would be diverted into supervised community programmes that would better deal with their offending behaviour.

Unfortunately, as the probation officers' union Napo has discovered, Straw is talking about one and the same group. A look at prison and crime statistics shows that of the 105,000 passing through the jails every year, about two-thirds will have at least three previous convictions and the vast majority will be serving less than a year.

This will leave magistrates and judges with a dilemma: do they simply send them down for longer or sentence them to custody plus, er, custody?

**DAVID LOCK, Labour MP for Wyre Forest and parliamentary secretary to the lord chancellor Lord Irvine, is extremely sensitive to criticism in his constituency.**

In January the left-wing weekly *Tribune* reported on the Wyre Forest constituency where a new organisation called Health Concern is the largest party on the council.

The report included an observation from Health Concern's vice-chairman Frank Baillie to the effect that Mr Lock, by switching his former allegiance to the campaign to save Kidderminster Hospital, had gone "for promotion instead of standing side by side with the people of Wyre Forest".

Mr Lock promptly threatened Baillie with a libel action and demanded an apology. Though everything he had said was demonstrably true – Mr Lock's change of heart about the hospital coincided with his appointment to a government post – Wyre Forest's insurers told the council they could not meet the costs of a libel action and so the wretched Baillie would have to apologise. Local papers were duly issued with the text of a grovelling and humiliating apology from Baillie conceding that Mr Lock had not knowingly done a single thing in all his life that in any way conflicted with the interests of his constituents.

Mr Lock's progress at the general election will be followed with great interest by the people of Wyre Forest who are still furious about the closure of acute services at Kidderminster Hospital. Many agree with Mr Baillie's comments – including speculation that Mr Lock does not stand a cat in hell's chance of reelection.

*"Can Johnny come out to die?"*

## Number crunchings

**£1,000**

■ awarded to nursery nurse, Lisa Potts, for physical injuries sustained when she shielded children from a machete attack.

**£2,500**

■ awarded to armed robber, Andrew Russell, for physical injuries sustained in wake of a prison outbreak attempt.

**KEITH VAZ, beleaguered minister for Europe, was in a smug, jocular mood as guest of honour for a pro-Turkey lunch at the House of Lords recently.**

Vaz was given a fawning introduction by Lord Ahmed, the Labour peer and host of the event, who praised Vaz's achievement as the first Asian minister. "Thank you for those kind words," replied Vaz, "although it sounded like my political obituary." He then praised Lord Ahmed's support for the people of Pakistan and Kashmir and added jokingly: "If any of you have problems with passports, perhaps he would be a better person to approach."

The lavish reception, held in the Cholmondeley Room, was organised by Musiad-UK, which promotes Turkish business in Britain. Vaz was given a decorative plate as a gift. Mindful of the sleaze claims flying around, the minister was quick to declare: "I will be handing this plate to my officials at the foreign office."

Vaz was surprisingly uncompromising in his support for Turkey's application for membership of the European union (EU). Given Turkey's disgraceful human rights record, Vaz's feeble bootlicking puts another nail in the coffin of "new" Labour's "ethical" foreign policy.

**THE prime minister's choice of Pentonville prison as the suitable venue for his statement on crime policy did not go down well with the inmates.**

On the days before the visit, prisoners were ordered to clear up the whole prison so that "not a speck of dirt" could be detected. On the great day itself, almost all prisoners were confined to their cells and not allowed out even for ordinary association.

Only the most reliable "trusties" were permitted to move in sight of the prime minister. Asked by his lawyer if he had a message for Mr Blair, one prisoner retorted: "Yes. Please don't come again."

**THE close relationship between "new" Labour and German IT giant Siemens continues to flourish – even though the home office was recently forced to scrap Siemens' "Casework" computer system, which was intended to speed up the immigration process, at a cost to taxpayers of £77m.**

Siemens was also behind the passport agency private finance initiative (PFI) fiasco in 1999, in which 400,000 passports were lost because of problems with a new computer system and many holidays were ruined, at a cost to taxpayers of more than £10m. But so passionate is this love affair that all such obstacles can be overcome.

Top press officer at Siemens Corporate Communications Sally Randi, who until last summer worked for Siemens Business Services, the division with direct responsibility for the failed home office system, has been on gardening leave since the start of February. Randi, who in former incarnations was a Labour party youth officer and worked for lobbyists Burston Marstellar, has told colleagues she is spending her sabbatical helping out "Alastair" at Millbank.

**HENDON Labour MP Andrew Dismore's Conservative challenger at the general election will be Dr Richard Evans. Like Dismore, Evans is a former member of Westminster city council, although he is unlikely to be making too much of the fact in his campaign.**

As a member of Westminster's housing committee, Evans voted at the notorious meeting of 8 July 1987 at which the Tories, under the leadership of Dame Shirley Porter, increased the number of council properties for sale in marginal wards. This was the start of the infamous "homes for votes" scandal which still rumbles through the courts. The district auditor's inquiry which followed concluded that there had been "no wilful misconduct" on Evans's part: "As a new member of the committee with little knowledge of housing matters he took his lead from others" – district auditor-speak, evidently, for "too dim to know what was going on".

**"NEW" Labour's new candidate for Stalybridge and Hyde James Purnell is not only a former bag carrier to Tony Blair (former researcher and latterly a Downing Street policy wonk), but he carries a good deal of political baggage with him as well.**

Not all his new found comrades will be pleased to learn that he was instrumental in having left-winger Liz Davies barred from standing as a Labour candidate in Leeds North East in the 1997 general election. The allegations that Purnell, and other colleagues from Islington council, trumped up against Davies were later found to have no truth in them whatsoever.

Young James and his colleagues were then obliged to write out cheques to the "Jeremy Corbyn election fund". Not an onerous punishment, it might be thought, but for the Blair-wanabes nothing could have been more hideous than handing over money to the sandal-wearing leftie. Not that this small brush with the law hampered young James, a former BBC corporate affairs adviser, and his rise to the top.

Now, however, Davies is to have her revenge on Purnell and other toadies. In April she publishes *Through the Looking Glass – A Dissenter Inside New Labour* – and the blurb from publisher Verso promises "a compelling insider's account of the events leading up to the party's spectacular fall from grace". None of it will make pleasant reading for James and chums.

**PERHAPS as a sop, party chiefs are making conciliatory noises about reinstating the troublesome Chapel Allerton Labour party within Leeds North East – the party that has been suspended for four years in the fallout of the Davies affair.**

At the end of last month selected "loyal" party members in the area were invited to a secret meeting at Leeds Civic Hall – not in the constituency – where they were promised that the Chapel Allerton party might be reinstated if, despite being denied any democratic representation, they went out on the stump and helped deliver a Labour victory in Leeds North East in the forthcoming election.

Party officials fear that a victory for sitting MP Fabian Hamilton – who won the constituency from the Tories in the Labour landslide of 1997 – is a far from foregone conclusion.

*'Backbiter'*

## COURT CIRCULAR

**BUCKINGHAM Palace is in a state of some irritation now the foot and mouth outbreak is threatening the date of the general election.**

Having received the nod from Downing Street that all was set for a 3 May poll, the palace kept Brenda's diary free for the following day so she could appoint her next prime minister. This involved putting back her state visit to Norway by three weeks to the end of May.

The new poll dates being chewed over could mean moving the Norway trip – again – or risk coinciding with a state visit by President Mbeki of South Africa. No senior royal flunkey has been brave enough to suggest to Brenda that she could always leave the formal appointment of the PM to her senior counsellor of state – Prince Charles. Very wise.

**SHOULD the voters of Hartlepool turn against Peter Mandelson at the next election – or should he decide not to stand – he may well find a job offer in the post from Prince Charles.**

For some time Brian has wanted to strengthen his private office by appointing a professional go-between linking St James's Palace and Whitehall. Such contacts are currently maintained in gentlemanly fashion by his private secretary, Stephen Lamport.

But Charles wants to appoint a "political liaison officer" with a broader reach and tougher style, who will ensure that his views and initiatives are presented forcefully (rather than being politely binned) and encourage ministers to "involve" him in new projects at an early stage. Mandy, he tells advisers, would be ideal.

Surprise! Both Mummy and Tony Blair are appalled. Brenda warns against becoming too involved in murky politics and compromising the monarchy's "impartiality". Blair says a constitutional monarchy involves the Queen working through him, with the rest of the gang staying firmly in line.

## AD NAUSEAM

**A GENERAL election looms, and in adland battlelines are being drawn. You'd be pushed to know where they lie, however, as both "new" Labour and the Tories have opted for the "we're not as bad as the other lot" lick, rather than committing to a single positive reason they should get our vote.**

Early last year the Tories appointed Edinburgh minnows Yellow M to handle their advertising. This was because party coffers couldn't stretch to the fees of a large London-based agency and, more to the point, what agency worth its salt would want to attach itself to a dead cert loser like the Tories come the election? After a lag-time of six months – an age for a first campaign – the Tories' opening salvo came last September. But the work, centred around a "Is this what you voted for?" theme, hardly packed a punch. Accusing the other side of breaking promises is already a political cliché.

The next batch emerged mid January, again following the broken promises theme with posters wailing "You paid the tax, so where are the teachers?" Helpfully, only a month later, yet more posters emerged to answer that very question: there are teachers, the Tories now conceded, but they're just not doing enough teaching. They're "form fillers", apparently, whereas with the Tories "teachers will be teachers", whatever that involves. Three changes of tack in five months, no convincing message and the occasional blatant contradiction: in advertising as in everything else, the Tories bumble on.

"New" Labour, by contrast, reckons it has advertising just about wrapped – it's just the same as politics. Step 1: obliterate any discernible message so as to alienate no one. Step 2: spend plenty of money paying your friends to make this void look good. Step 3: oh, sod Step 3, we're going to win anyway because the Tories are hopeless (see above).

The resultant campaign emerged last week in the form of, wait for it, the word "Tory", with the Y cunningly disguised as a pair of scissors. Labour then had to reissue the posters a week later with the word "cuts" added on, because focus groups (another one of advertising's gifts to politics) had shown that dumb Britain didn't understand such wondrous wit. Beware, then: Tories cut things. Perhaps it will be tax, which surely wouldn't be so bad?

Behind this latest bout of mediocrity lies advertising's greatest self-advertiser, TBWA's Trevor "the cuckoo" Beattie. Trev is also the man "behind" a number of advertising's most famous campaigns ("Hello Boys", fcuk) although curiously he didn't write any of them. In a desperate recent four-page *Observer* gush on how winning the "new" Labour account gave him such immense pride (ie upped his profile), Beattie opined: "A poster with a bra on it, that's all right, but it's not going to change the world." A pair of scissors in a Y-shape, one might suggest, is unlikely to change the world either.

## NOOKS and CORNERS

**THE Dome at Brighton is not a church but it is possible to imagine it as some strange inter-denominational cathedral, for it is circular, with pointed windows.**

Designed by William Porden in an Indian style based on the aquatints of the Daniell brothers, it was the first expression of the ridiculous but dear old Prince Regent's dabbling with the Orient. Built in 1804-08 as the Royal Riding House and Stables next to Prinny's Marine Pavilion, it preceded the latter's transformation by Nash into the fantastical domed Royal Pavilion by over a decade. It is a wonderful, exotic, extraordinary thing that does much to create the special character of the town — sorry — city of Brighton.

For long used as the Corn Exchange, the Dome was brilliantly converted into a theatre in 1934 by that stylish architect Robert Atkinson, who carefully restored the exterior while transforming the interior. The original stables had been lit from huge skylights in the great domed roof which were petal shaped in the Moghul style. Atkinson's theatre did not require top-lighting, so these were blocked; but he retained the external glass covering, enabling the curved surface to reflect the sky and to sparkle in the sun.

No such care or subtlety has been exhibited by the "Arts Team" of Renton Howard Wood Levine, architects of the millennial refurbishment of the Dome and Pavilion Theatre with heritage lottery and public money. Both skylights and dome have been covered in lead. The effect is crude, dull and, well, leaden — and completely inaccurate historically. Can English Heritage have approved this stupid change? Why has it been allowed to happen?

One reason is that control of the Royal Pavilion Estate was separated in 1985 from the Royal Pavilion itself — where the restoration work has been exemplary for half a century — and pavilion staff have now been ordered not to talk to the press about this aesthetic and historical disaster next door. That is the way Brighton 'n' Hove is run now it is controlled by a Blairite junta.

*'Piloti'*

# ITV

**Star For A Night (BBC1)**
**BBC Talent (Radio Times)**

**IN THE past the BBC has always been particularly sneering about talent shows, believing they belonged on ITV. In the last year, though, the corporation has become a sort of open casting call for its audience. You walked on a licence-payer and you walk off a star!**

The BBC Talent project aims to find new presenters among the public and, in the current *Radio Times*, opportunity knocks, in a soap dialogue competition, for anyone who fancies writing a script for *EastEnders*.

And, on Saturday evenings, there's **Star For A Night**, in which five part-time crooners belt out a cover version of a recent song. One will be selected by the panel of experts, on which Barbara Windsor dispenses motherly encouragement and a music biz bloke called Nigel is built up as Nasty Nigel, in desperate competition with *Popstars*, a series which is another sign of TV's strenuous efforts to pull the viewers through the glass. Even the programme's hostess speaks of the democracy of television. She's Jane McDonald, the off-shore chanteuse who won recording contracts and concert gigs as a result of appearing in the BBC's cruise liner docu-soap.

The problem with *Star For A Night*, as with most talent contests, is that it mainly rewards imitation. Although all the singers are officially appearing as themselves, none of them is performing original material and so you have the curious sense of watching an edition of *Stars In Their Eyes* in which they're impersonating someone you don't really know.

A further drawback is that, in an age obsessed with democracy and equality, none of the panel wants to be discouraging. Even the wannabe Nasty Nigel keeps coming over all nice. A rather statuesque songbird, of whom Noel Coward would have observed "she's a big girl, Mrs Worthington", was assured that she was one of the best lookers the judges had ever seen. When a contestant asked if she should head for America or aim to make it here, the question was respectfully addressed.

The history of television is that most presenters have come through local or pirate radio, most singers and comedians via the clubs, and the majority of scriptwriters from theatre, books or the old drama department script unit which read all submissions sent on spec. All of these nurseries for future talent work more reliably than an artificial play-off between unknowns on a random evening.

Admittedly the script unit has now been shut down to save money, but the other feeder systems remain in place. So why is the BBC becoming an end-of-pier contest for all-comers? The answer is that this is the ultimate expression of the recent mania within the corporation for public accountability.

Most modern companies want to be reactive. But newspapers usually make available over only the small space of the letters to those who pay the cover-price, and even a touchy-feely company like Virgin doesn't offer frequent flyers a seat on the board. The BBC, though, has misapplied the logic of accessibility. Harassed by successive governments into showing that it takes notice of licence-payers, the BBC has hit on the idea of inviting the audience to make the programmes.

This trend started with the phone-ins which, encouraged by free dial-in numbers maintained at high cost to the BBC, now dominate 5 Live and are spreading across the other wireless networks. The next stage was the docu-soap, in which licence-payers in the jollier or odder professions were given their own show.

*"...and now we go live to our reporters who have travelled all over the country to see how foot-and-mouth disease has managed to travel all over the country"*

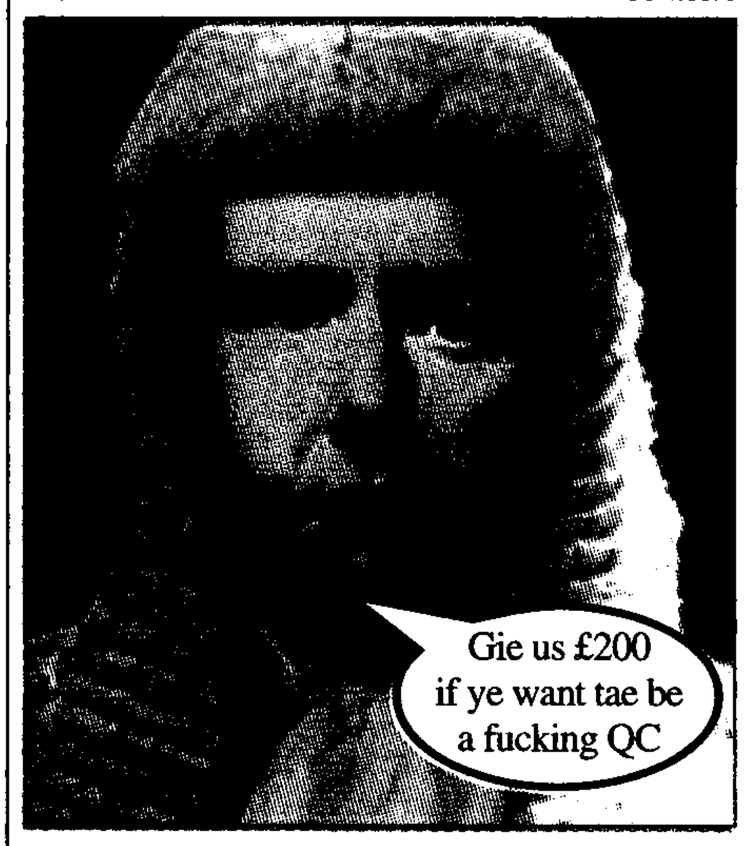
At about this time, the corporation started to use the advertising slogan: "It's Your BBC." Assumed to be a general promise of accessibility, it has now turned out to mean: "You'll be on the BBC." For a £104 a year, you'll get the chance to write an *EastEnders* script or audition for a singing career or have a try out as a newsreader.

Curiously, only one area of the BBC's activities remains closed to the viewer and restricted to a closed set of self-selecting professionals. This is the management and executive level. Nowhere do you see the leaflets promising "try your hand as a BBC governor!" or "how would you like to be Head of News-Gathering for a day?" Funny that.

***'Square Eyes'***

# SPLIT personalities

**Bob Moore**




**Derry Irvine Welsh**

## GOING LIVE AT SELBY

**THE ITN Lunchtime News following the disaster at Selby was a classic.**

Harry Smith gave a live interview with an A&E consultant at Pontefract General, who would otherwise have been inside the hospital treating patients: "What are the nature of the injuries?" asked the hack sensitively.

Then it was time to go live to a sheepish looking Colin Baker, standing on his own but with obvious commotion off-camera. The camera panned to a media scrum where John Prescott was "talking to reporters," said Baker – all the reporters except him, that is.

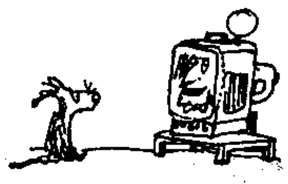
Excluded from this mêlée, Baker showed a shot of "what he's looking at" instead – namely a lot of crumpled wreckage – while missing the live interview the deputy prime minister was giving the BBC and all the other hacks within earshot at the time. Instead he trod water: "No one here wants to play the numbers game"... "we think that the figure of 13 dead is correct."

Back in the ITN studio anchor John Suchet cued up a tape of John Prescott arriving before revealing "the latest from the crash scene – John Prescott has arrived."

Then there was a further development as ITN found out what Prescott had said. "News just in – John Prescott has asked for an interim report and will make a statement at 7pm," said Suchet. "We're going to look now at pictures of the injured being taken away earlier today," adding that they were "absolutely appalling" – but obviously all ITN had to hand.

At the end of the programme there was just time to talk to John Draper, who revealed that Prescott was waiting for "an interim report" and would make a statement at 7pm.

## MEDIA NEWS



**BBC hacks are quaking in their suede shoes at the arrival of new business editor Jeff "Essex Boy" Randall, who was personally lured from *Sunday Business* by Greg Dyke with a £250,000 salary to make the corporation's pinko correspondents learn to love capitalists.**

He has already fired off his first memo to Dyke, complaining about Nigel Cassidy's interview with Dixons chief executive John Clare on the *Today* programme's business slot. "If that is what passes for business journalism on the BBC, it is no wonder that captains of industry refuse to help," he fumes.

"Nobody in their right mind would put up with that. It was crude consumerism of the worst kind. The interviewer's only apparent aim was to prove that Dixons is more expensive than dot.com retailers. Big Deal. Of course Dixons is more expensive... The fact is that customers prefer shopping in shops, and they are prepared to pay for the privilege...

"If that slot is on Radio Four simply to champion the downtrodden shopper, then why not drop the business tag and rename it the Ralph Nader memorial lecture? No serious business people will be interested in listening to, much less participating in that kind of crap."

## DUMB BRITAIN

**THE real weakest link on BBC2's *The Weakest Link* is of course the gaffe-prone and embarrassing presenter Anne Robinson with her irritating wink.**

**AR**: Which cardinal's downfall was caused by his failure to secure Henry VIII's divorce?

**Contestant**: Wesley.

**AR**: Correct!

**AR**: In what century was the First World War?

**Contestant**: The Twentieth.

**AR**: No, the Nineteenth.

**AR:** In sport, which football manager is associated with the phrase: "Do I not like that"?

**Contestant**: Graham Taylor.

**AR**: No. The correct answer was Graham Taylor.

What baffles contestants more though are Robinson's eccentric attempts to pronounce foreign words or words of more than one syllable.

For example, who could cope with a question about that well-known Swiss attraction, the *GUNGFRAU* railway? Who could possibly guess the last *PLENTANGENANT* monarch? And what about the little-known novel *FAR FROM THE MADDERING CROWD* or Georges *SIMEON*'s Maigret stories? Both exist in the parallel Robinson lexicon along with the philosopher *WITJENSTEEN*, *LYMEOOSIN* cattle and that well-known composer *SEE-BEE-LEE-IS*.

Yes, Anne Robinson you are the weakest link... Goodbye.

PS: And goodbye too to the researcher who composed the question about which bird sits on the Australian flag with the kangaroo? The flag has neither kangaroo nor wallaby – only the Union Jack and the Southern Cross. The question should have been about the Aussie coat of arms.

**"LIKE anyone who sat through the last series of *The 11 O'Clock Show*, I've become fascinated by Near Death Experiences." Thus Charlie Skelton, in his regular column in the *Guardian*'s listings supplement, *The Guide*, on 3 February.**

Could this severe *Grauniad* critic Charlie Skelton be related to a young chap of the same name who used to write for *The 11 O'Clock Show* but left before the last series?

## LUVVIES

"Acting, if you take it to the ultimate extreme, is the most profound act of self-revelation that you can possibly attain. It even scares me sometimes to see how far I'm willing to dig inside myself to give my character more depth and substance."

**CATE BLANCHETT**
*Sunday Express Magazine*

*An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.*

**ACCLAIMED documentary-maker Paul Watson, who founded the fly-on-the-wall genre with his 1974 film *The Family*, decided last year that his next project would be to show all aspects of life in an NHS hospital so that an electorate due to go to the polls could see the true state of their health service.**

Salford General Hospital in Greater Manchester agreed to be filmed, and Watson spent several months forging relationships with staff there and making preparations. Filming was just about to start at the beginning of the year when Watson was contacted out of the blue by health secretary Alan Milburn's flunkies at the department of health asking for his guarantee that the programme would not be broadcast before the general election.

Watson replied that as the prime minister had not yet announced the dates, he could give no such guarantee. Within a few days it became clear that those at hospital who previously had been willing to cooperate no longer felt they were in a position to do so, and Watson was given no option but to scrap the documentary. The scenes from Salford's wards which struck such dread into Milburn's heart might never be broadcast, but at least the health secretary is in good company – Watson's 1986 film about four yuppies called *The Fishing Party* is said to be Mrs Thatcher's least favourite film.

**AS IF there weren't enough young sports presenters floating round the BBC already, Radio Five Live is searching for more via the BBC "Talent" scheme.**

It is looking for "anyone who is 18 years old" and, presumably, slightly sportier than the averagely overweight, hamburger-munching couch potato. Indeed, so important is the image of "sportiness" to Five Live that it has chosen as its business supporter none other than, er, McDonalds, which will plug this search for new young talent across "four million trayliners".

McDonalds of course has been shown in the courts to "exploit children" and to "falsely advertise their food as nutritious, risking the health of their long-term regular customers" – as Mr Justice Bell put it in his unsporting summing up in the McLibel trial in 1997.

## JUST FANCY THAT!

Well into his 70th decade, Michael Parkinson still dominates the petty world of the chat show.

— PETER PATERSON, *Daily Mail*

## MUSIC & MUSICIANS

**MUSICIANS have been complaining for years about dishonourable practices behind the elegant and scholarly old-world façade of the musical instrument trade.**

The international market in Stradivari, Guarneri and other high-value string instruments is ruled by a handful of dealers who know each other, help each other out and are in daily contact with the "experts" in the auction houses. Which means that when a player takes an interesting fiddle, bow or cello to an auctioneer for valuation, he knows that word will spread around the business within hours or even minutes. And that isn't necessarily to his advantage.

"These people are a mafia," according to one distinguished Russian violinist who has become so wary of the dealers he now conducts transactions with them at arm's length under an assumed name. "There's often some question about the exact provenance of an instrument; and they'll value it according to their interest rather than yours. I've known of cases where a dealer has deliberately undervalued to get a low reserve at auction. Then the dealer bought the instrument himself, by proxy, cheaply, kept it in his safe for several years and reintroduced it to the market at a hugely inflated price... It's time someone blew the lid off it all."

The lid did shift a little the other week when a long-running high court action brought against the London dealer Peter Biddulph was settled amid much secrecy. Eight years ago Biddulph had been appointed by the executors of a deceased businessman, Gerald Segelman, to dispose of a collection of string instruments worth roughly £11m at present values. Matters dragged on. And by 1997 Segelman's executors decided they were being duped by Biddulph. They began an action accusing him of false accounting, of selling instruments to fellow-dealers at knockdown rates and of receiving undisclosed commissions on the sales.

The case settled for a sum believed to be around £3m. But Segelman's solicitors promise they haven't finished yet. There will be more actions to come against the dealers Biddulph was in league with. Meanwhile there must be some very anxious old-world people waiting for a letter in the post.

*'Lunchtime O'Boulez'*

## SUPERMODELS

KERBER

# DOWN ON THE FARM

## FOOT AND MOUTH SPECIAL: 1

**EVEN in the blackest cloud someone may find a silver lining. As foot and mouth (FMD) casts such a cloud over an already reeling farming industry, at least this has given a welcome boost to the hidden agenda of that strange "big is beautiful" alliance between the Maffia and the supermarkets.**

When FMD exploded across Britain it drew embarrassing and long overdue attention to one part of the grand plan: Maff's deliberate policy since the 1980s to close down hundreds of rural slaughterhouses (see *Eyes passim*).

Using the excuse of implementing EU hygiene directives, the real aim was to centralise meat production in the 80 or so large factory abattoirs which mass produce meat for the supermarkets. This required piling as much hassle and unnecessary cost as possible on the small to medium-size abattoirs which provide a vital service for smaller farmers and produce most of the country's better quality meat. Eight hundred have closed in the past 15 years, leaving vast areas of Britain without any local abattoir.

But when FMD arrived, and it was pointed out how the loss of local slaughterhouses had greatly increased the risk of spreading diseases, the Maffia's response was revealing. It immediately tried to divert attention by laying the blame on local markets like Carlisle (where farmer and dealer Willie Cleave bought the lambs he then transported back to Devon). This was because a second part of the grand plan is to close down the auction marts which provide such a crucial link between smaller farmers, smaller abattoirs and smaller butchers.

What the Maffia has long been after, along with its friends the supermarkets, is a system whereby markets are cut out of the chain so that farmers can sell their meat on contract direct to the big buyers, ie the supermarkets.

By eliminating tiresome competition from the free market, this gives the supermarkets much greater control of the price they pay for their meat. And in this respect, FMD came as a blessing from heaven. It provided the Maffia with the perfect excuse to introduce a system whereby desperate farmers are permitted under licence to move animals off their farm direct to chosen abattoirs, thus cutting out the marts. With a bit of luck, those which still survive will disappear and the supermarkets will have it all their own way.

Brilliant – save for one little snag. The licensing system the Maffia has come up with is so cumbersome it will soon drown in its own paperwork. But at least the supermarkets have another major consolation from the FMD crisis. As supplies of home-grown meat dry up, they now have the green light to buy in huge quantities of cheap meat from the continent, where meat consumption has dropped by up to 50 percent or more thanks to the mass-hysteria over BSE.

The only obstacle to continental beef producers offloading even more of their unsaleable beef on the British market in recent months has been the ridiculous preference of British shoppers for British produce (so long as the EU's ridiculous labelling rules allow them to know what is genuinely British and not German beef shipped in through Ireland, to be repacked in Britain with a perfectly legal Union Jack on the label). But within a year or two, with luck, as the last small British beef farmer follows the last smaller abattoir into oblivion, the supermarkets will have the field to themselves. With a big thank you to their friends in the Maffia — and, of course, good old FMD.

*'E. N. Muckspreader'*

## FOOT AND MOUTH SPECIAL: 2

**THE MAFF view, in keeping with veterinary thinking, is that an animal is the place where disease and medicine fight it out. Only recently was MAFF forced, in the case of bovine TB, to recognise that the animal's lifestyle might play a part in its reaction to disease.**

Foot and mouth is seen entirely in the context of animal as passive victim. But in the 1920s that careful scientist Sir Albert Howard made a remarkable observation. For 20 years in India he carried out research into what were later called organic systems. During that time his cattle never became infected with FMD, even though it was endemic in the area and his animals literally rubbed noses with diseased cattle.

Recorded anecdotes from earlier outbreaks in the UK suggest organic animals are less prone to infection with FMD, just as they are more resistant to many other diseases. Perhaps Tony Blair knew as much when he dropped hints during his speech in Gloucester that supermarket-driven intensive farming may not, after all, be the only way forward.

● IT IS possible that official minds have missed a trick in trying to reduce further FMD outbreaks.

The disease is uniquely devastating because, though not deadly, it is extraordinarily infectious. The virus is produced in vast numbers by infected animals and carried away in the air. But it needs rain to bring it down and infect other animals. This can only happen at night because daylight destroys the virus.

Once a movement ban is effective, almost all further spread is airborne at night when there is both wind and rain. A week without rain would bring the epidemic to an end. MAFF and the NFU are so busy fussing about walkers and vehicles, which are relatively unimportant, that they are ignoring the real danger – rain. Tell farmers to get those animals inside, out of the rain, at least at night, and it's a fair bet this would save some farms.

● THE idea that the still-to-be-announced election may be postponed because canvassers would risk spreading foot and mouth disease has caused ribald comments down on the farm.

Most amusing is the ignorance of farming life it reveals. Do the politicians really think we rural types don't have any other visitors? Or that electioneering – as a percentage of vehicle movements in rural areas – would register at all?

Most farmyards are busy places, many of them blue with smoke at 7am every morning as commuters living in redundant workers' cottages and converted barns warm up their Range Rovers for the trip to the city. On behalf of the farming community, Gumboot solemnly promises, however, that we will forgive all candidates who do not light us with their presence on this occasion.

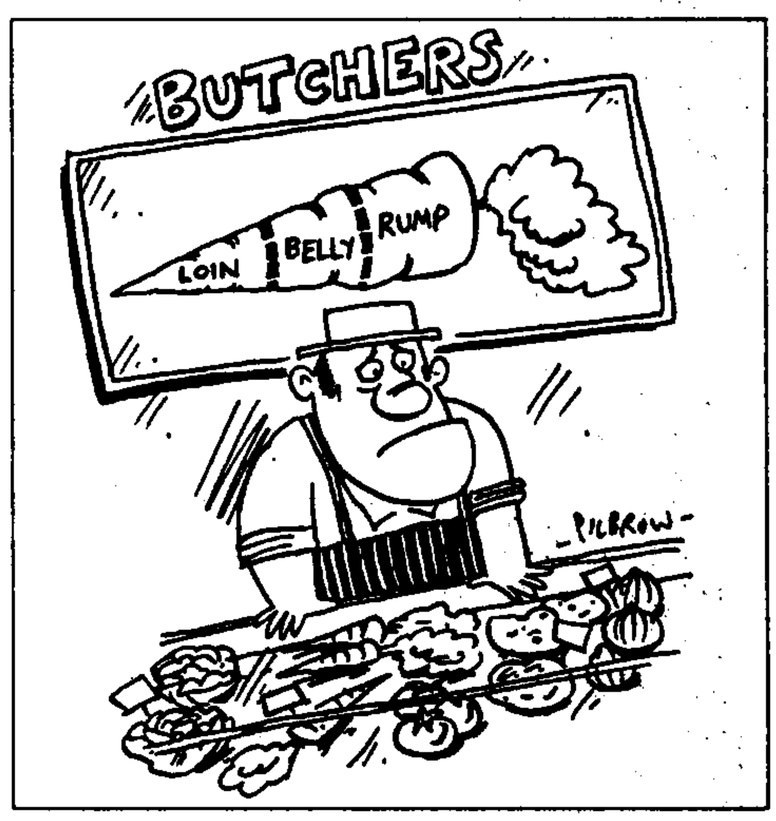
*'Gumboot'*

## JUST FANCY THAT!

**SOME town-based hacks covering the foot and mouth outbreak have evidently become confused as to what goes on in the countryside day to day.**

As the *Daily Express*'s Ed Harris wrote so movingly at the end of last month: "The worry was clearly etched on the face of Paul Cheale as he described the destruction of every single pig and head of cattle in his abattoir."

Er, sorry Ed but this is what happens in abattoirs...




## WHAT A TRUCK UP!

**THE effect of cheap road haulage on British agriculture (see *Eye* 1015) was plain to see as cases of foot-and-mouth disease were confirmed at opposite ends of the country.**

The outbreaks showed how farm animals are routinely trucked hundreds of miles between farms and from farms to abattoirs. If haulage prices were high enough to reflect the true environmental and social costs of lorry journeys, most animals would be raised and processed locally, there would be more jobs in rural areas and outbreaks of infectious diseases would be easier to contain.

*'Dr B. Ching'*

## DOING THE ROUNDS

### What, no report?

**REBECCA JARVIS, publicity officer for the Bristol Royal Infirmary inquiry, has issued a stern rebuttal to M.D.'s suggestion in the last *Eye* that the "delayed" final report has been on health secretary Alan Milburn's desk for the last two months.**

"No drafts of the report have been circulated to any outside individual or organisation, or to government or any minister," she says. "The report is currently being prepared and claims it has been distributed to anyone are without foundation and untrue." According Ms Jarvis, no one outside the inquiry office will see the report before 31 March.

Curiouser and curiouser. M.D.'s source was a senior consultant whose evidence has been central to the inquiry and his/her reaction is illuminating. "I can understand the denials, but I am on a committee which will sit for the first time on 8 March, 2001. The remit is `to consider likely changes needed to the current organisation and delivery of paediatric cardiology and cardiac surgery services in England and Northern Ireland'. We are to be asked to take into account the reports of the Bristol and Brompton inquiries."

If the final report is not being suppressed and – as Ms Jarvis believes – Alan Milburn hasn't the faintest idea what's in it, the implications are even more unsatisfactory. It means that "new" Labour will have formulated its national plan for the NHS, decided on the appropriate manpower, renegotiated the consultants' contract and will probably make extensive election pledges on health *without* taking into account the findings of the most in-depth (and expensive) report into the failings of the health service. It's thus in danger of becoming a white elephant before it has even been made public.

By some bizarre coincidence two other child heart surgery reports — at Brompton and Harefield hospitals — are also "missing in action". The former was initially promised in May 2000 and after six readjustments (the latest failed projection was January 2001), no one knows when it might appear. To lose one heart surgery report just before an election is bad luck. To lose three looks downright careless, doesn't it?

*M.D.*

## Number crunching

**£1bn**

■ estimated cost to UK economy of foot and mouth disease helped spread by long distance movement of livestock

**£2bn**

■ profit last year of top four supermarkets whose buying policies are responsible for long distance movement of livestock

## ROTTEN BOROUGHS

# PHONEY EVIDENCE

MORE ON the plight of black social worker and Unison convenor Martin Warsama, victimised by his council bosses and disowned by his union (see *Eye* 1020).

Last month Warsama faced a Doncaster council investigatory panel looking into the false allegation that he had leaked to the *Yorkshire Post* the story of a 13-year-old boy sent back by social services to his abusive father (no action, needless to say, is being taken against those who made this appalling decision).

At the hearing managers produced a BT telephone bill which showed that several calls to the newspaper had indeed been made from the Unison office. Warsama pointed out that he had been out of the office on two of the dates concerned. And his colleague Frank Perks, who operated out of the same office, had been quoted in the paper, on other matters, after three of the calls.

Warsama was naturally very keen to discover how his bosses had got hold of his union's private phone bill. The council says it was supplied by the Unison regional office. The regional office emphatically denies this. So were the phone bill and other papers which found their way into the bosses' hands stolen? Angry grassroots Unison members have called in Inspector Knacker to discover the truth.

# DEATH ON THE TYNE

TONY MARTIN, the cobbler who has waged a one-man war on the rotten Labour regime at Durham city council (*Eyes passim*), has been involved, against his will, in the grisly case of paranoid schizophrenic Raymond Wills.

Wills was sent indefinitely to Ashworth high security hospital last week after admitting butchering his sister and her five-year-old son. The 29 year old pleaded guilty at Newcastle crown court to the manslaughter of Caroline Wills, 26, and her son Ashley at their home in Cramlington, Northumberland, in March last year, after hearing voices in his head. Caroline received 43 stab wounds and Ashley, whose head was almost severed, 53.

In 1999 Wills, a tenant of the housing association Enterprise 5, moved in next door to the Martin family's home in North Shields. Martin alerted police and North Tyneside council's social services department after his neighbour terrified the family for weeks by screaming at night and banging on the walls. He once threatened a visitor to the Martin household with a knife. Nothing was done. Then Wills was chased by local youths after attempting to abduct an eight-year-old girl.

When another group of self-styled vigilantes vowed to kill Wills, Martin alerted social services and the housing association to the fact that his neighbour's life was in danger and urged that he receive medical treatment. Wills was eventually moved to an address in Newcastle in December 1999. Three months later he slaughtered his sister and nephew.

After the killings Martin had a meeting with North Tyneside council leader Rita Stringfellow and social services chief Brian Doughty. While Martin wanted an explanation for why his warnings about Wills's mental state had apparently gone unheeded, Stringfellow seemed more interested in the fact that Martin said during the meeting that he was receiving legal advice from Durham's Tory parliamentary candidate, barrister Nick Cartmell.

Martin still has had no answer about how his schizophrenic neighbour was ignored by North Tyneside social services with such tragic results. On the other hand, he did receive a visit a few days later from a reporter from the Newcastle paper *The Journal*, who had received a tipoff from Labour's northern region director, Chris Lennie, who in turn had been alerted by Stringfellow, that Martin "was being funded by the Tories" in his campaign against Durham city council. Good to see Labour getting its priorities right.

**PS: The hacker who placed an obscene photograph on the Durham cobbler's website (*Eye* 1022) has been identified as a 17-year-old schoolboy... who just happens to be the son of Fraser Davie, press officer for Labour-controlled Durham county council. Davie senior tells the *Eye*: "This was nothing whatsoever to do with me. I certainly do not approve of what my son did, but he is responsible for his own actions."**

# GEE WIZZ

SO FAREWELL, then, Lambeth council's corporate anti-fraud team (Caft), founded in 1997 following a report by Elizabeth Appleby QC, which found that the council was riddled with corruption. It will cease operations at the end of this month.

Caft got off to a flying start when its first head, Jim Gee, who now runs the counter-fraud directorate of the NHS, promised councillors Caft would expose £23m of housing benefit fraud in its first year. The actual figure was £5m.

Eyebrows were raised when Gee then hired a close friend, Paul Tiffen, as training manager — a new and unadvertised post. Tiffen had been working for the London organised fraud investigation team (Lofit), but moved to Caft shortly before the plug was pulled on Lofit after a damning report by the benefit fraud inspectorate (*Eyes* 963 and 975). Tiffen's wife, Rachael Jones, moved from Islington council to succeed Gee in Lambeth when he moved on to greater things at the NHS, taking Paul Tiffen with him.

Even the feeble fraud detection figure of £5m in the first year started to look good this year, when it slipped below £1.3m — the point at which Caft pays for itself. Matters were not helped by staff becoming apparently more concerned with swapping racial abuse — referring to African colleagues as "gorillas" via the internal email, for example — than with tackling fraud.

Rachael Jones, seeing which way the wind was blowing, last September successfully applied for a job with Waltham Forest council to set up, er, a corporate anti-fraud team, starting in April this year. Wisely perhaps, given the racism and incompetence that crippled Caft in Lambeth, she will be known by her married name, Rachael Tiffen, in her new job.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I'm a district councillor because I want this village to remain a good place to live and I want my daughters to grow up here in a nice environment. People hanging off bridges does not help."

*— Wycombe district councillor Chris Elliott (Lib Dem, Stokenchurch), reacting in the* Bucks Free Press *to the suicide of a man found hanging from a bridge over the M40.*

**● IT'S that time of year again when Westminster council Tories enjoy their annual civic dinner at council taxpayers' expense. As ever, as a former lord mayor of the borough, Dame Shirley Porter is invited to the £21,000 pig-out on the 13th, which is being held at the Dorchester where the menu amusingly includes *Délices des Dames*. As is also traditional, the Labour party has condemned the dinner — this year pointing out that the council has just saved itself the cost of the bash by getting rid of two citizens' advice bureau staff.**

### Kevan Jones

In the issue of 28 January 2000 we said that Mr Jones, a senior member of Labour-controlled Newcastle city council, was a frequent guest in the Newcastle United directors' box. Our article could have been taken to mean that Mr Jones could have been influenced by this when chairing an internal Labour party appeal concerning Cllr John Quinn, who had supported a major building development near Doncaster by a company controlled by a director of Newcastle United football club. Mr Jones has assured us that he has never been "a frequent guest" at the football club and we accept that this is the case. We apologise to Mr Jones for this error.

# High Principals

WHEN further education colleges became independent of local councils in 1993-1994, one of the great boons for them was all the land and property they gained as a result.

For Hendon College, which has since merged to become Barnet College, this included a large area of playing fields near the Grahame Park council estate in north London, part of Barnet council's fiefdom.

In 1995 the college won planning permission from the council to develop part of the land for housing. In return it paid Barnet council £250,000, a nominal fee considering the profit it stood to gain from selling the land to developers, and, more importantly, it promised to build a multi-purpose sports pitch which could be used by local people on the remaining land.

This was signed and sealed by a section 106 agreement, which meant that any successor to the college would also be legally bound to build a sports pitch and pavilion to be available to the public for a minimum of 98 hours a week. This was particularly good news for the children on the Grahame Park estate, including the boys who play for Mill Hill Rangers youth football club, who currently have to travel long distances to reach the nearest outdoor sports ground.

Under the agreement the pitch should have been built by January 2000, but work was still not underway by April 2000 when the college suddenly announced that what local people *really* wanted was a smaller play area for kids and, er, another 60 houses. It was a mere coincidence that this meant the college would rake in a tidy profit instead of being forced to build a sports pitch it could ill afford.

The one hitch with the new plan was the section 106 agreement, which the college could only wriggle out of with Barnet council's permission. After almost a year of discussions, the college, which is submitting a new planning application, feels it has a strong chance of winning the day. This confidence is surely unrelated to the fact that Barnet's strategic director for education and children, Martyn Kempson, and the leader of the council, Alan Williams, both sit on the college's board of governors.

## IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

IT'S A MIRACLE !!!
WE'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT! IT DEFIES BELIEF !!!
OH COME ON, GUYS, PEOPLE HAVE KIDS ALL THE TIME
NEVER MIND THAT, THIS IS THE FIRST HOSPITAL WE'VE BEEN IN THAT SERVES A DECENT MOCCHACINO !!!
COFFEE BOUTIQUE

# Letters

## Star Letter Of The Week

*Sir,*

*You have been more than generous in your coverage of the so-called "Mirrorgate" scandal these last 12 months. Last week I reviewed your oeuvre as far as this story goes and am now able to file the following report. So far you have made 27 allegations against me and my fellow columnist, Anil Bhoyrul. To the best of my knowledge 16 of them are completely untrue, seven of them I believe you could justifiably call fair comment while the remaining four are true but trivial. It is not a record of which any competent journalist would be proud.*

*Yours,*
*JAMES HIPWELL,*
*Former Columnist on The Mirror.*

## Lookalike

**Coin**

**Maggie**

*Sir,*

*Found a rather familiar face in an 1892 publication "Atlas de Monnaies Gauloises" by Henri De La Tour.*

*The coin is from Brittany in the First Century BC. Is reincarnation a likely prospect? I think we should be told.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*IMOGEN WELLINGTON,*
*Dept of Archaeology, University of Durham.*

## Wray of light

*Sir,*

*Perhaps because Piloti is too busy rubbishing successful vicars who run expanding churches (yes, there are one or two), he fails to note that the traditional rectory which he reminds us is "traditionally at the heart of the parish" have all been sold, at knock-down prices, to various sorts of folk who regularly make a parson swear.*

*He really ought to visit a modern rectory. The walls are paper thin which admittedly does have the advantage of keeping the heating bill down. But it also means that when the wife (or husband) is trying to catch up on a mountain of paperwork — a task she/he is forced to do in order to keep the wolf from the door because the vicar's stipend hardly goes above £17,000 pa — every blast of vain doctrine, every woeful word and gnashed tooth is heard throughout the house. The babies and young children cannot sleep for the sound of the whirling of photocopiers and PCC members bickering and sucking on pipes and other obnoxious substances. Who is going to pay for the endless cups of tea, the endless rolls of toilet paper... the traditional rector in his snug, eight-bedroomed, traditional rectory?*

*Come on, Piloti, give the Pevsner and the Betjeman to Oxfam. Or better still send the proceeds to the Vicar of Berkswell to help him pay for a much needed resource.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*REV. MICHAEL WRAY,*
*Isham, Northants.*

**The Queen has stayed four times as Mr Farish's private guest at his Kentucky stud farms, lending him a social cachet in return for which he waived his stud fees for his royal visitor.** *Grauniad*

## Sour note

*Sir,*

*I don't agree with Lunchtime O'Boulez that the New Grove has been dumbed-down by the inclusion of more entries on popular music, nor with his description of William Lloyd Webber senior as a "respected composer" who should have had more space in the New Grove than his son Andrew. William was a talentless academic hack whose music was never popular, while his son has a talent that appeals to millions. The music is completely worthless but his success is a phenomenon of the culture industry that deserves some analysis.*

*Yours,*
*ANDY HAMILTON,*
*Dept. of Philosophy, Durham University, Durham.*

## ME, myself, I

*Sir,*

*Your description of Action for ME as a militantly anti-rehabilitation charity [Eye 1022] is not one that I recognise. I have now had ME for three years, have had to retire from a rewarding middle-management position and have so far received no treatment from the NHS. With no NHS treatment I have spent hundreds of pounds in the search for an alternative cure, treatments that receive considerable prominence in the AfME journal as possible aids to recovery.*

*What many including AfME are asking for is effective treatment for an illness that blights the lives of so many in Britain today and it was that desire which under-pinned the Panorama programme whatever its supposed faults. That the medical profession continues to largely to base available "treatment" on cognitive behavioural therapy and graded-exercise, in the face of evidence from sufferers that it makes many worse not better, is a sad indictment of the state of current knowledge about this illness and the medical profession's inability to listen effectively to patients. It is to be hoped that the current government working party comes up with a proper description of the illness and that work then starts on establishing an effective treatment regime that doesn't just consist of trying to convince us that we are imagining our symptoms.*

*STEVE WELLS,*
*Nottingham.*

## Off-patsy

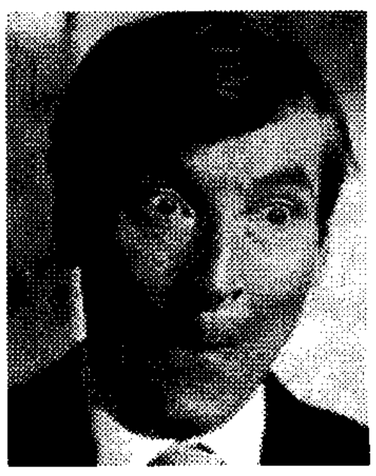
*Sir,*

*I feel that your most recent edition of Diary has done Ms Patsy Kensit a serious injustice... you've omitted to mention her first husband, the son of Terrence Donovan and, more importantly, the drummer with the popular beat combo Big Audio Dynamite!*

*NICK COLBOURNE,*
*Via e-mail.*

## Lookalike

**Williams**



**Redwood**

*Sir,*

*Shame they never got round to making "Carry On Conservative". A bit late now. I suppose, if they did, John Redwood could certainly take Kenneth Williams' role.*

*Yours etc,*
*ENA B. RUSHTON,*
*London W1.*

## Country Alliance

*Sir,*

*I am **disgusted** that you have an advertisement for the Countryside Alliance in Private Eye and wish to cancel my subscription. Please refund the rest of this year's money.*

*JENNIFER BERRY,*
*Chediston, Suffolk.*

*Sir,*

*The inclusion of a heart-rending advert by the Countryside Alliance (the pro-hunting group) in the last Eye seems incongruous in a humorous magazine such as your own.*

*There I was, expecting to be cheered by your usual material, only to be profoundly saddened upon reading of the plight of poor Jenny on page one of the issue. Tears cascaded right up my nose as I read of this charming, well-bred young woman being called "scum" simply because she wanted to express her love of animals in the warmest of ways — by killing them.*

*Moreover, precisely because of your magazine's usual content, you should be concerned about the possibility of readers assuming this advert to be a spoof concocted by yourselves in order to make the Countryside Alliance look ridiculous. This would be tragic, given the Alliance's heroic efforts to date to get its arguments taken seriously by the public at large — the vast bulk of whom find said arguments so contemptibly specious as to be almost laughable.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*DR SIMON FRANCIS,*
*Bristol.*

*Sir,*

*After many years of reading Private Eye, please cancel my subscription. The reason: the advertisement featured on page two of Eye 1022. How could you? I would be grateful to receive a refund which I will forward immediately to a charity specialising in animal welfare.*

*Yours disappointed,*
*MRS SUE PAYNE,*
*Shropshire.*

*Sir,*

*Having purchased my usual copy of your organ, I was aghast on opening it to find right inside the cover a full page advert for that blood-crazed "sporting" load of yobs calling themselves the Countryside Alliance! Have you finally fallen into the hands of Lord Gnome and/or the Torygraph? I could not believe it. If I had a subscription, I would cancel it!*

*Yours, deeply disappointed,*
*LINDA LISGARTEN,*
*Via e-mail.*

*Sir,*

*Thank you for your full-page advert for the Countryshite Alliance.*

*This is the first time I've never got past page two of Private Eye before putting it in the bin.*

*PETER ATTAWAY,*
*Via e-mail.*

*Sir,*

*Did you really need the money that much? Your advertisement for the Countryside Alliance shocked me.*

*How can we be against multi-millionaires buying the Conservative Party when you are prepared to be bought also.*

*Am seriously considering whether to renew my subscription.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*J. RAYNOR,*
*St Neots, Cambs.*

*Sir,*

*Well done! The spoof ad for the Countryside Alliance ("Hi, my name is Scum") was very funny. Keep up the good work.*

*IAN ANDREWS,*
*Via e-mail.*

# I-SPY

*Slovenia* *Lille, France*

**Submitted by L. Marsh, Charlie Bayliss, Paul M. Walker.** £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

## Chile response

*Sir,*

*I agree totally with L.A. Natalon from Chile; yes we should be banning Blair rather than fox-hunting to protect Britain from his socialist menace. This should be followed up by the immediate internment and torture of all Labour party followers and other "dissidents" in order to stabilise the new regime.*

*If Mr Natalon knows of any friendly CIA agents who would be willing to help out by destabilising our elected government I would be only too pleased to hear from him.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*NICK MAZONOWICZ,*

*Cheltenham.*

## American duty

*Sir,*

*Re: today's letter page. Surely "leftie" Emma Thompson has just as much right (geddit?) to address the "Pinochet problem" as Patagonia's legal system has?*

*Given his admiration for Chile and its infrastructure I assume Snr(?) Natalon is not self-exiled. So what kind of South American right-wing exile is he exactly?*

*Perversely,*
*SIMON FLYNN,*

*Cheltenham.*

## Brought to Booker

*Sir,*

*I am obviously honoured that my colleagues should have wanted to satirise a long boring letter I wrote to the Spectator correcting the ravings of Dr Sked, former leader of the UK Independence Party (although if they had asked my help I could have inserted one or two jokes into their effort). But is Private Eye by any chance related to the magazine which for months used to reduce its readers to stupefaction with a feature headed "UKIP News"? When it comes to printing yards of impenetrably paranoid UKIP claptrap, I suggest the chap you should send up is your gullible correspondent. At least I got my facts right.*

*Love and kisses,*
*CHRISTOPHER BOOKER,*

*Via e-mail.*

## If the CAP fits

*Sir,*

*Re: Dr Barkwroth's letter (Eye No. 94). Shouldn't his initials be C.A.P. rather than C.J.P.?*

*Yours faithfully,*
*R.A. McWHIRTER,*

*UKIP Chairman and Candidate, London.*

## Self abuse

*Sir,*

*I am writing to protest against your irresponsible repetition of Will Self's dramatic comparison of his cigarette to a cat's penis (Pseuds' Corner, 1022). Mr Self's deep influence on the impressionable young may well lead them to start smoking feline penises in emulation of their hero. If any doubt is felt about the extent of Mr Self's power, just consider the tell-tale similarities between himself and the disaffected young: bad hair, recreational drug abuse, narcissistic self-absorption and an overblown prose style.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*CATHERINE ATHERTON,*

*Oxford.*

## Colemanballs

*£10 paid for contributions*

*"It seems that they're playing with one leg tied together."*
**KENNY SANSOM, Sky News**
(Howard Rose)

*"Cello players, like any great athlete, must keep their fingers working."*
**JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER, ITV**
(J. Jeffries)

*"Bradman spent his latter years in Adelaide, sometimes watching his Australian contemporaries in action."*
**Sky News**
(Tom Kilcourse)

*"For me their biggest threat is when they get into the attacking part of the field."*
**RON ATKINSON, ITV**
(Glenn Hoggarth)

# HOM SAP

AUSTIN

## Letter from Tunis
### *from Our Own Correspondent*

**"LAND of Serenity" promise the posters at Tunis airport, with their portrayals of palm-fringed beaches. But there's a side to our North African paradise which the innocent European package tourists don't get to see. One reason for the "serenity" here is that if we even threaten to rock the boat we quickly get put away, having first had a good kicking from the police.**

The authorities – from our dear President Zeine el-Abdine Ben Ali (himself an ex-interior minister whose popularity can be gauged from his 99 percent vote in the 1999 elections) downwards – are presently desperately trying to keep the wraps on the case of Dr Moncef Marzouki, a prominent human rights activist. In the last few months, he has been sacked from his post as professor of medicine at Sousse University, banned from travelling abroad and tried on charges of "maintaining an unauthorised association"; and "spreading false information with the aim of disturbing public order".

The "unauthorised association" is the respected Conseil National des Libertés en Tunisie (CNLT), of which Marzouki is the spokesman. The CNLT, founded in 1998, has been doing sterling work publicising human rights violations here. The "false information" was a speech he had given in Morocco in October. Our nobly independent judiciary convicted Marzouki but sentenced him to just a year in prison for his heinous crimes, prompting the government to appeal against such leniency.

He was followed in court by Nejib Hosni, a leading human rights lawyer and CNLT member, who was badly beaten after his arrest and must now spend five years in jail on the most spurious of charges. The two trials followed a crackdown on our main human rights organisation, the Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH). All its files were seized and it was made a criminal offence to conduct LTDH work. The league is now the responsibility of a government-appointed judicial administrator.

Nor have our government's efforts to promote our reputation for serenity and silence the whingers slackened off. Last month plainclothes security thugs beat up Jallal Zoughlami, the brother of celebrated journalist Taoufik Ben Brik who last year staged a hunger strike in protest at the confiscation of his passport and the harassment of his family. Jallal's "crime", it would seem, was that he had attempted to publish a magazine. This prompted the police to lay siege to his home and attack visiting supporters. Jallal has now gone on hunger strike in protest.

Our serenity-loving president describes his critics as "mercenaries and traitors." It must have been especially galling, then, to have had to let in last month a couple of do-gooders from across the Mediterranean without meting out the kind of treatment we can more easily dispense to our own brothers. Robert Menard, head of Reporters Sans Frontières, and the Green MEP Elene Flautre, came over from Europe to express support for Zoughlami. Our security forces sat sullenly impotent in the face of such a flagrant challenge to our serenity. Other irritants include Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, who also insist on peddling the nonsense that here in Tunisia we have any kind of problem with respect for civil liberties, justice and the rule of law.

But what of the European union (EU), with which we have a formal association agreement? In addition to allowing a degree of free trade between Tunisia and Europe, this explicitly requires our government to respect human rights.

"Respect for human rights and democratic principles constitute an essential element of the agreement", declares the document. Has Brussels moved to enforce compliance by suspending some of the agreement's trade concessions, as it is entitled to do? Not at all. In Brussels as in all Europe's capitals there's some official lip-pursing and tut-tutting. But otherwise it's business as usual. How serene!

# FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

**"It seems that Mr Yamada fell asleep behind the wheel of his car in a parking lot in Amagasaki at about five in the morning, having spent the previous two days in a brothel," a police spokesman told a press conference in Hyogo, Japan. "It was an automatic car, and he left it in the drive position, with the ignition switched on. And that, I fear, was the source of all his subsequent difficulties."**

**The press conference was held after Tetsuya Yamada, 33, had been dragged by passers by from his burning car, and**

**rushed to hospital. "While asleep, it appears that Mr Yamada stepped on the accelerator, causing the car to travel about 5 metres forward, before colliding with another car. This set off his car alarm, but neither that, nor the impact of the collision managed to wake him. His foot continued to press down on the accelerator until, after about two hours, the car's tyres caught fire. They burned for about thirty minutes, before wearing away to the wheel rims, which then began grinding into the concrete, leaving ten-centimetre gashes in the parking lot. Eventually the engine caught fire, then the interior of the car. And things could have become serious for Mr Yamada if members of the public had not rescued him."**

**After being treated for smoke inhalation and minor burns, Yamada was released from hospital.** (*Mainichi Daily News, 19/12/00. Spotter: Paul Szycs)*

— o —

*"This so-called toy turns the death penalty into a sick joke," Families Minister Segolene Royal told the National Assembly in Paris. "Death-Row Marv is manufactured by an American company, and features a condemned man who is strapped and wired to an electric chair. At the flick of a switch, sparks flick across the chair, the prisoner writhes in pain, while smoke comes out of his head, his features contort in agony and, finally, his brains and eyes pop out on springs.*

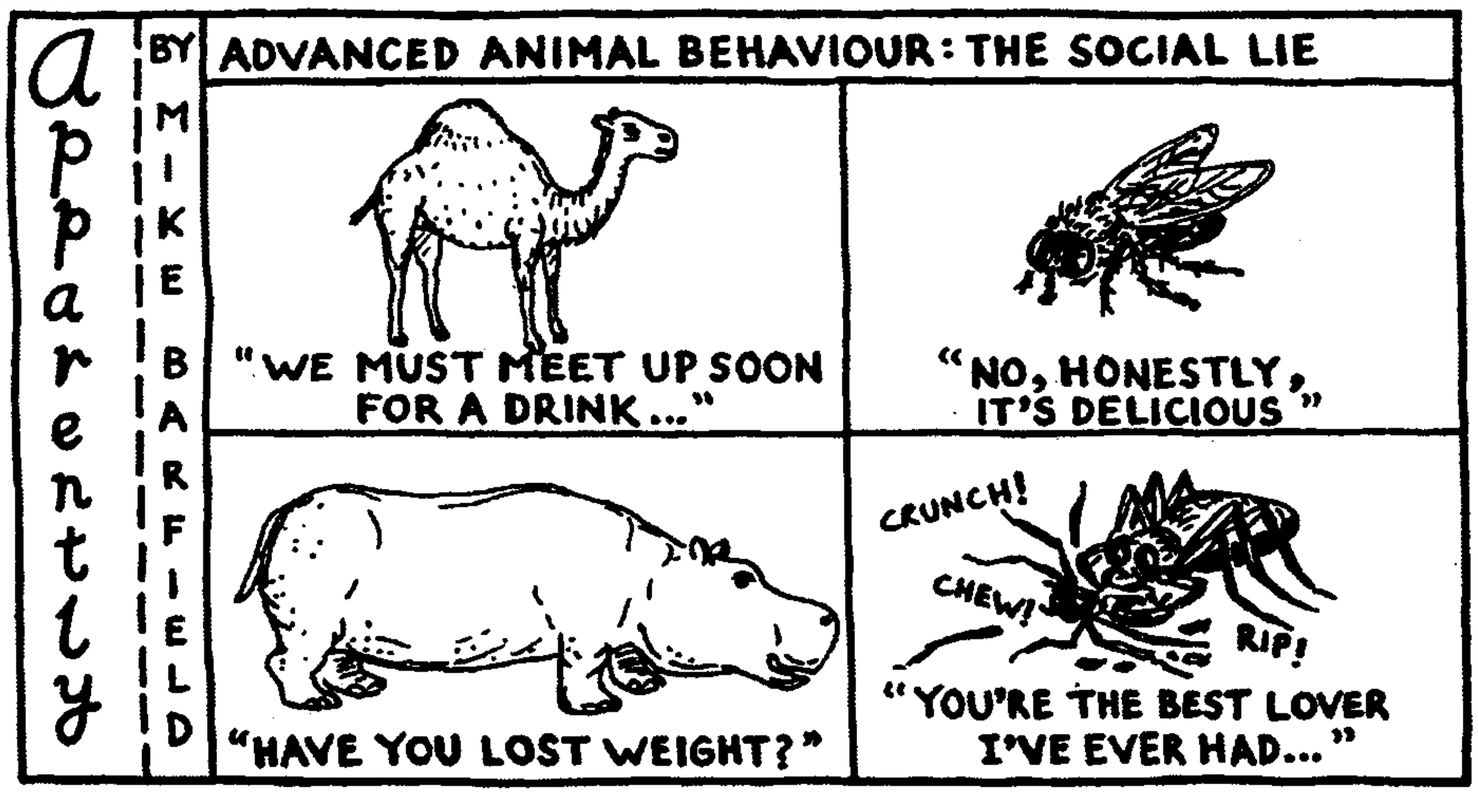
*"May I remind you that this very Assembly abolished the death penalty within France in 1981, and it is totally inadmissible for toys that make fun of judicial killings to be sold here, especially when they are aimed at young children. I therefore recommend that all imports of Death-Row Marv should be banned forthwith."* (AFP, 17/1/01. Spotter: Wallace Brown)

— o —

"Having listened carefully to all the evidence, I hold the prisoner primarily responsible for his own situation," Judge Eben Jordaan told the High Court in Pretoria. "However, I agree with him that constipation is a debilitating condition, and I therefore rule that he should be entitled to more roughage in his diet, and to an adequate supply of toilet paper."

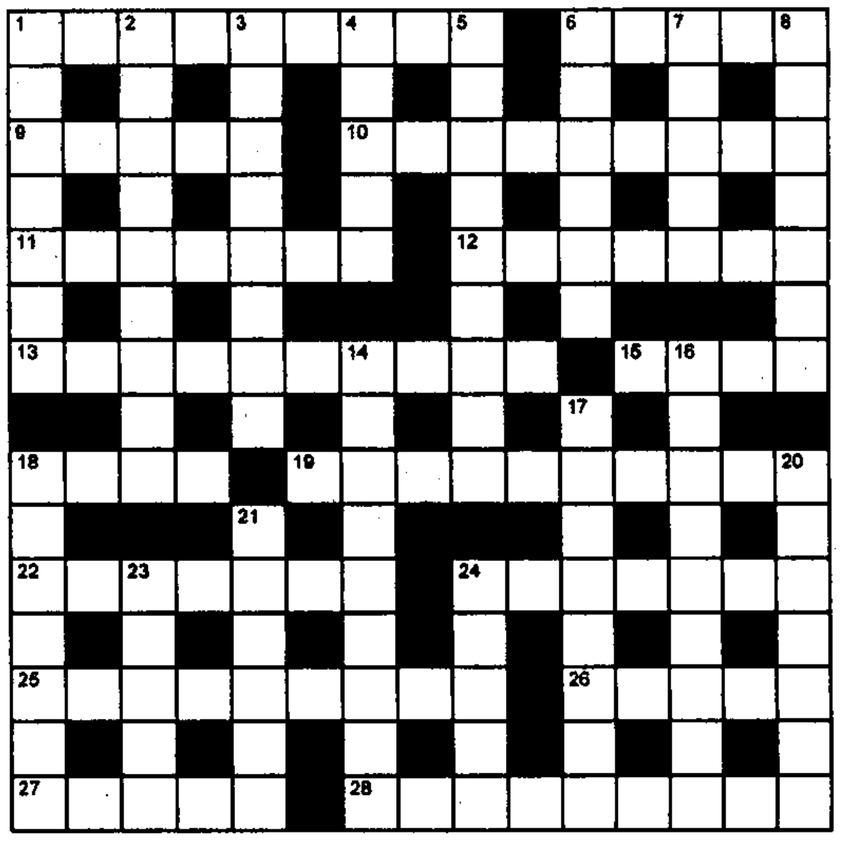
Earlier, prisoner Jacobus van der Merwe (currently serving a thirty-four-year sentence for fraud) had appealed for a series of improvements to be made to his living conditions in Pretoria's C-Max Prison. "I know I'm not in a hotel, but I have stomach problems, and not all prisoners have such problems. The prison porridge is too hard for me to eat, and the warders give me onions and cabbage, which I don't like. When I do get meat, it's just a few pieces of fat, but I have high cholesterol, and that could cause my premature death. Because of the diet, I always have either constipation or diarrhoea, and the little piece of toilet paper they give me is not adequate. Most nights, I'm forced to make do with my hand, and that is inhumane treatment. I need my own roll, and I want proper tissue paper, not that hard shiny stuff."

Despite winning his dietary and lavatorial concessions, Merwe's attempts to get a radio, television, fridge-freezer, alcohol, mobile phone, and Internet access in his cell were all rejected by Judge Jordaan. *(The Citizen [South Africa], 2/9/00. Spotter: Mr Kennedy)*




# EYE CROSSWORD 178

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Fag has to go down humiliatingly – an obfuscating device (5,4)
6 Excellent container for a bust ball, having imbibed a few (5)
9 Car can give you piles round inside of bum (5)
10 Northerner's ruse for safeguarding family jewels (9)
11 Organ collecting cat's blinking hair (7)
12 Yell "BUP's frigging on your back!" (5,2)
13/17 The way in which some gays use the old domestic delivery point? (10,8)
15 Jeffrey only two-thirds an ageing sex symbol (4)
18 Jagger according to the Mexican patient? (4)
19 Ex-president's dirty underwear, etc. not removed (10)
22 Cracker: take it with confection and get end away (3,4)
24 Uprisings died when contained by Sharon Wild (4-3)
25 Crawler responsible for breaking up Blair-Bush talks? (9)
26 See 7 Down
27 Old tribesman sees Clinton's horn / 'love point' (5)
28 Patsy gives head to old lecher following direction (9)

DOWN

1 *Sun-Express* merger could come in for abuse (7)
2 Selling oneself / hospital short, enema got nasty (2,3,4)
3 Subjected to Labour in the finish (8)
4 'Two balls Jack' has a hard thingy (5)
5 Not supportive of ministerial arses (9)
6 Breasts getting large and pointed? It'll make your bum look big (6)
7/26 A naiver *Eye* would exploit a terrorist bomb victim (5,5)
8 Written down as "taking place daily" (2,5)
14 Food provided by Dick and companions (9)
16 Potentially embarrassing issue, Lancashire offering to get a Tory leader round (3,6)
17 See 13 Across
18 Badly treats girl's outside wear (7)
20 Labour out? Easy! (2,5)
21 "Some icon, Mandelson!" – Rooker (6)
23 Copy Brenda, duck, getting smothered with kisses (5)
24 Jute harboured by author Salman (5)

**£100 prize to first solution opened on 16.3.01. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.**

## Solution to Crossword No. 177

**Winner: JULIET C. MOLLOY**

ACROSS: 1 No can do 5 Egghead 9 Demagogue 10 Admin 11 Resignations 13 My eye 14 Roosevelt 16 Lighten up 18 Roger 20 Teleprompter 24 Heavy 25 Agitating 26 God slot 27 Essence.

DOWN: 1 Nude 2 Compete 3 Negligent 4 Organ transplant 5 Election promise 6 Glaxo 7 En masse 8 Dung 12 Stir 13 Mole 15 Europeans 17 Get laid 19 Grecian 21 Loyal 22 Shag 23 Ague.

# FOOT AND MOUTH

## Now it's out of control

by Our Reporting Team **Phil Space** and **Phillipa Page**

**THERE WERE a further 69 cases reported yesterday of newspapers being infected with huge pieces about Foot and Mouth Disease.**

Experts have confirmed that the outbreak has now reached epidemic proportions.

Large areas of newspapers have been declared "out of bounds" to normal readers, who have been advised to stick to the crossword and stay out of the news pages altogether.

### SHOCK

There are now calls for all newspapers to be burnt, despite vets' claims that newspapers can recover from the virus, even though this may take as long as six months.

**● How do you know if your paper has got foot and mouth?** ***Ten tell-tale signs.***

1. Enormous pictures of burning cows.
2. Massive headline — "Farmers' Worst Nightmare".
3. Large filler graphic showing a) growth of cases compared to 1967 and b) areas of country infected.
4. List of events cancelled – i.e. Regional Ten-Pin Bowling in Neasden, All-England Tai-Kwando Championships in Swansea, Rollerblade Exhibition in Carlisle.
5. No explanation or analysis at all.
6. Er...
7. That's it.

# POLITICIAN *NOT* A LIAR SHOCK

by Our Political Staff

**MR PETER Mandelson was today cleared of lying over the Hinduja Passport Affair. "I was telling the truth," he told reporters.**

"No wonder he was fired," said one political expert. "You can't have cabinet ministers behaving like that. The Government's reputation will be seriously undermined."

# Railtrack Man Takes Over At Woolworths

## How It Will Work

1. The pick-and-mix will be split into two operating companies, one responsible for the pick and one for the mix.
2. There may be some delays in the pick-and-mix service to the wrong kind of sherbert in the jars.
3. Customers are advised to seek alternative sweets or to stay at home.

Mr Gerald Corbett is 76.

## Late News

Woolworths shares in terrible crash *(Reuters)*

## Soap Update

# The Archers

JEFF has returned to Grantchester from his holiday in Uganda to face Mary who is not best pleased to hear about his fling with Nikki, the fifty-year-old mystery blonde. But more trouble is in store when Sally goes to the papers to tell them about her and Jeffrey in the car park outside the Bull and Shit.

Jeffrey tries to phone the Pope but Mary, meanwhile, is saying nothing. She confides to the vicar that her main worry is that Jeffrey may *not* go to prison after all when his trial comes up.

**WEDDING story no 2: A Canary Wharf banker from Morgan Stanley Dean Witter has won a GMTV contest to be the first person to get married on the London Eye, which is 450ft high. The second prize was a circumcision on the Docklands Light Railway.**

*The Wharf*

Are you interested in 'The Life of Chris?' Find out more with FREE cassette tapes. Contact Christian Educational Services U.K.

*Metro (North East)*

# TIMES CANCER MAN NOT DEAD

by Our Media Staff

**MR RUPERT Murdoch, the famous Times owner, has not died and is to celebrate his seventieth birthday this week.**

Murdoch was diagnosed as having cancer a few years ago, but shows no signs of slowing down in his desire to take over the world.

Friends say that he has borne the disease with his customary lack of humour, wit, compassion and humanity *(cont. p. 94)*

# POETRY CORNER

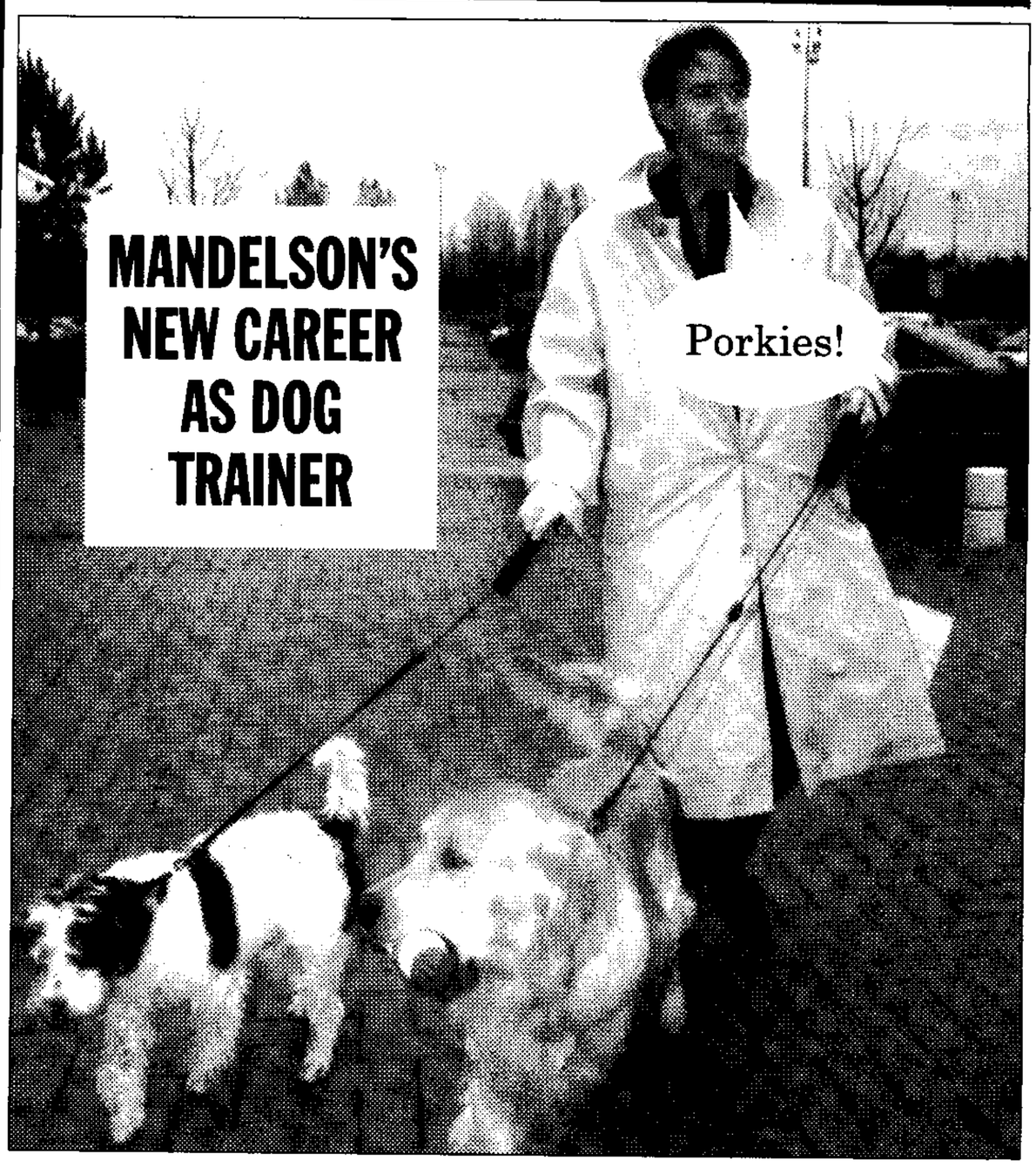
**In Memoriam**
**John Diamond**

So. Farewell
Then
John Diamond.

You were
The journalists'
Journalist.

Even in
Death
You managed
To fill up
The pages
Of all the
Newspapers.

E.J. Tribute (47½)



# ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

*Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)*

Hullo!

Lent is upon us yet again, and I'm sure we're all thinking "What can I give up?"

With this thought in mind, can I tell you about a visit I recently made to our local prison, Thirdways, where I was able to talk one-on-one with some of the inmates.

And a very humbling experience it was!

After all, these are all people who in a very real sense have given up something very precious – their freedom on behalf of the community.

And the good news is that Mr Straw, who runs our Neighbourhood Watch, has plenty of plans to enable more and more people to join them!

But that experience set me thinking. As I came out of the prison, I thought of all the other people in the community who could well benefit from a short time behind bars!

I don't want to name names, but our former churchwarden, Mr Mandelson, is one which immediately comes to mind!

And another, of course, is Mr Woodhead, who used to help out with the St Albion's sixth form (particularly, I have to say, certain of the girls!). It seems that he, like Mr Mandelson, is very bitter at no longer being part of the St Albion's team!

And then, of course, there are all the farmers who are asking for money because

of this foot and mouth disease.

Surely they should be thinking seriously about why this should have happened to them? Might God not perhaps be trying to tell them something?

Something about all the terrible things they have done to the countryside in the pursuit of profit? Some of them making up to two thousand pounds a year!

After all, don't we read in the Good Book about how God would punish people in the older days? We remember the story about the Nazarene swine who got foot and mouth disease, so that Jesus, quite rightly, had to order them to jump over a cliff!

So, let's not hear any more whingeing from these farmers! Or else we'll all give up meat from Lent, and then see how they feel!

Not a bad idea actually, especially since when I was in Tesco's yesterday there was very little meat to be had, apart from some frankfurters marked "produce of Schweinenfever, Germany".

I was only sorry that my visit to Tesco's was once again ruined by our combative friend in the checkout queue, who shouted "I hope you're giving up for Lent, vicar!"

I had no idea what he meant, but said that I would be very pleased to visit him in Thirdways when he finds himself locked away there, which, in my view, is likely to happen in the very near future!

Yours, Tony

## Lenten Addresses

The first of our series of Lent talks was given by Mr Straw of the Neighbourhood Watch. He took as his theme "The Deadly Sin of Greed", with particular reference to the legal profession. Mr Straw drew on his personal experience as a former lawyer to give us a fascinating insight into the absurd sums of money that lawyers can earn. Unfortunately, certain members of the audience, including the Vicar's wife and Mr Lairg, had to leave early after one minute, due to a sudden attack of 'flu. In the discussion afterwards, Mr Vaz was warmly applauded when he pointed out that there was no need for lawyers to earn a lot of money from the law, because there were much easier ways to make a fortune. Mrs Mortimer unfortunately introduced a sour note by saying that, although her husband was a very rich lawyer, she wasn't going to make any further donations to church funds, because the vicar had preached a sermon on "The Evils of Foxhunting". Our special thanks to Mrs Jowell for the delicious Organic GM Pancakes, supplied by Mr Sainsbury. Their unusual fishy flavour was much appreciated!

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In our next edition we shall be publishing selected extracts from Mr Hammond's report on the unfortunate resignation of our former churchwarden, Mr Mandelson. I, of course, haven't seen his report, the contents of which are strictly embargoed, but, from my reading of it, I'm afraid Mr Mandelson doesn't come out of it very well at all! A.C.

## Announcement

I gather that the protest meeting scheduled to take place outside the Vicarage (the so-called "March Against The Vicar") has been postponed indefinitely. Good to see that people are giving up something sensible for Lent! T.B.

(PS. Thanks for the very funny joke, Mr O'Farrell!)

## GRAND MILLENNIUM TENT AUCTION by Mr Falconer

Many thanks to everyone who turned up to our very successful sale of the contents of the Millennium Tent. Among the lots sold were:

*1 Giant Papier-Mache Gerbil (over 64 centimetres high) 12p*

*5 "Millennium Tent 2000" pens, inscribed "One Amazing Biro" 16p*

*1 Chemical Toilet (unused) in mint condition £1.20*

*(This was a very good bargain for Mr Bragg!)*

*1 Playstation II (easily repairable) from the "Forward To The Future Zone" 35p*

*1 packet frozen "Millenniburgers" (best before 31 December 2000) 5p*

The grand total raised for Parish funds from the sale was £7.68. Well done, everyone!

**The Vicar pays a visit to the St Albion's Rehabilitation Centre for Drug Abusers and Down-and-Outs. He found time to meet Mr Booze who told us afterwards, "The Vicar seemed genuinely concerned that I had smoked pot in the vicarage and said he would alert the relevant authorities, especially the police."**

# POLLY FILLER

It's every parent's worst nightmare. Charlie, our energetic four-year-old, has presented me with his birthday list. And what's on it? A Lego martian set? A Bob The Builder doll? A Tweenies video? No. It's a chainsaw.

Because Charlie has become a fan of Eminem – aided and abetted by our irresponsible 15-year-old child-minder Tanya from nextdoor. (Or rather ex-child minder, as she is now, since I sacked her and reported her mother to the Social Services.)

When I told Simon, Charlie's supposed father figure *(Don't make me laugh! Simon doesn't, except when he takes his trousers off!)*, what did he say? Nothing. He just mumbled something about Alice Cooper hanging himself when we were young and carried on watching Pro-Celebrity Elephant Polo from Tamil Nadu on the Sky Endangered Sports Channel with Jonathan Ross and Julia Carling. A typically spineless male reaction! It was left me to ask Charlie to turn off "Stan" and he just said "No way, bitch". I told him I would tell his father about his behaviour. He merely replied "Simon's a faggot". What is a parent to do?

I had no alternative but to ban the unpleasant Mr Mathers from the Filler household, confiscate Charlie's mini-disc player and lock up the television in the basement.

Thankfully, my strategy has worked. Charlie realises that he was wrong and blames Tanya for leading him astray. (In fact, he has threatened to shoot her with an Uzi, lock her in the boot of a car and drive over a cliff!)

Still, that's the dilemma, isn't it, for us modern parents? Are we the strict Victorian parents of the past? Or are we woolly liberals for whom anything goes? Will the real Polly Filler please stand up?

© Polly Filler.

Aloo Baigan (Potato & Aborigines).....£1.80

*Balti Tandoori, South London*

**Anyone who wakes up repeatedly during the night craving food may have night-eating syndrome**

*The Times*

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

# Chris Bighead Breaks His Silence

*For six years CHRIS BIGHEAD was the most bigheaded figure in British education. He still is. Starting in today's Daily Telegraph Bighead lifts the lid on how he was right and everyone else was wrong – although he didn't mention it at the time.*

*Now read on...*

I can be silent no longer. I have to tell the full story behind the education crisis that has blighted the children of this country. And the truth is devastatingly simple. I was right about everything and everyone else was wrong.

TOMORROW: *How Everyone Was Wrong and I Was Right.*

© Chris Bighead, the Daily Torygraph

## PRODUCT RECALL

# BRITAIN

(No. 74732461)

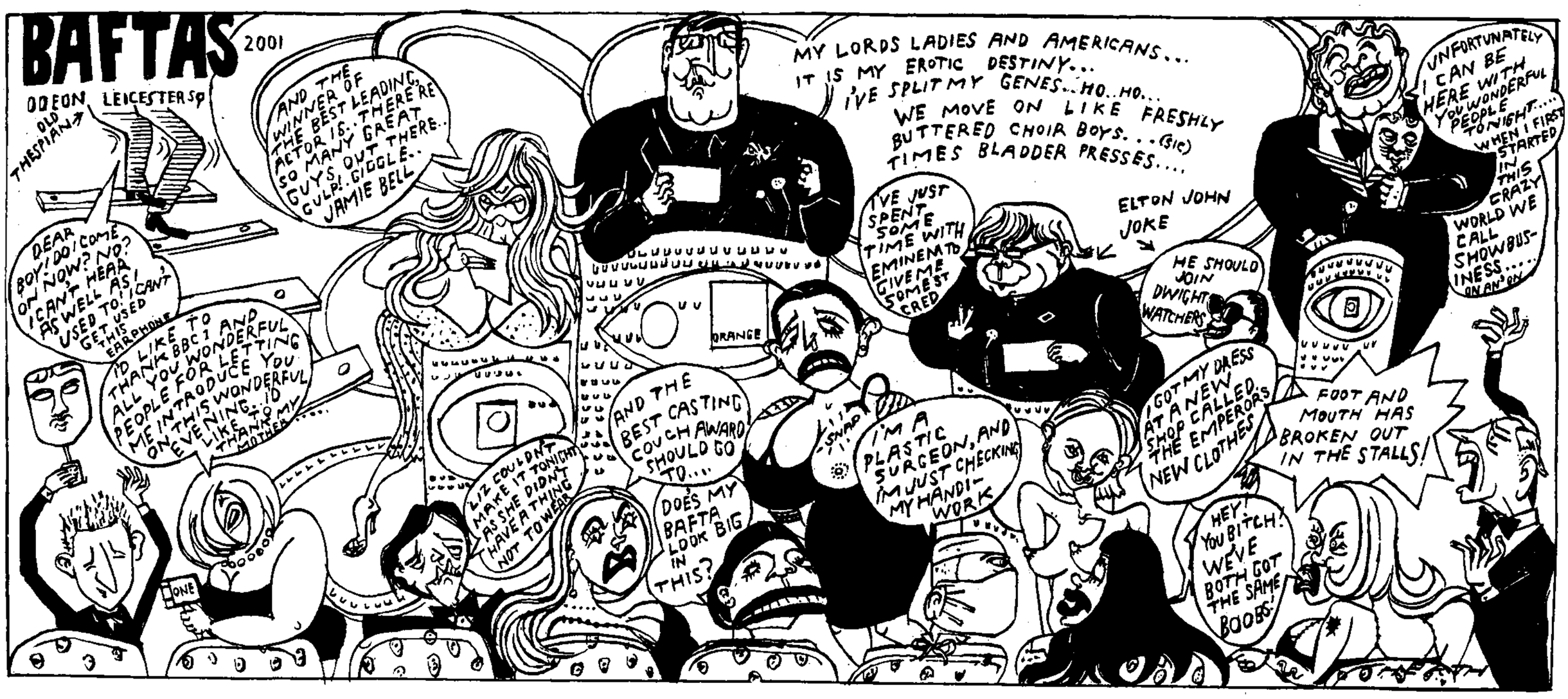
**The manufacturers regret that a number of serious problems have recently emerged with this product.**

**Millions of complaints have been received regarding the constituent parts of Britain – none of which appear to work. Furthermore, some of them are extremely dangerous and can cause serious injury.**

**The manufacturers regret that Britain no longer conforms to acceptable safety standards and have therefore decided to withdraw the product from the market.**

**Issued by UK PLC – "Disasters R Us"**

# HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

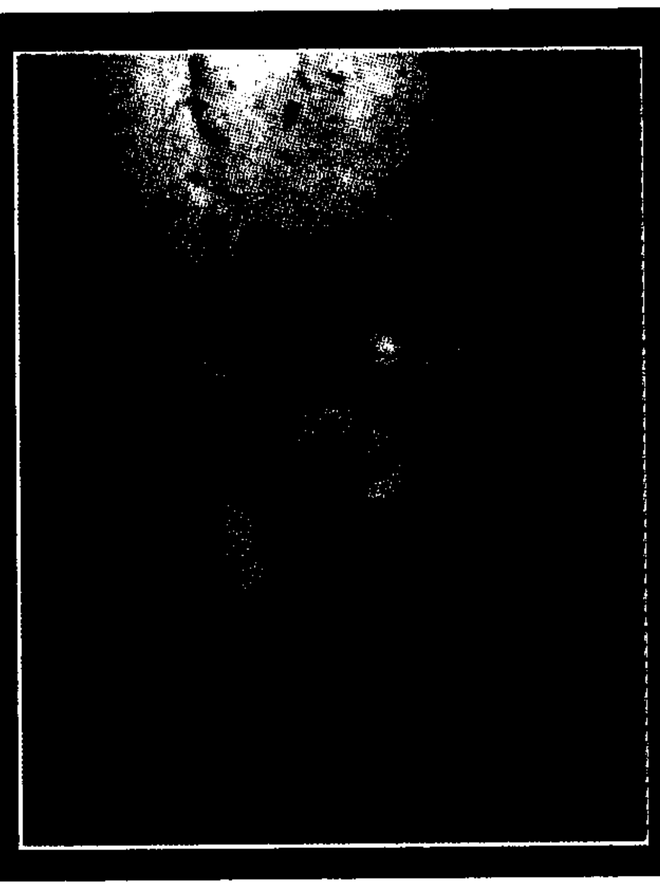

BAFTAS 2001
ODEON LEICESTER Sq
OLD THESPIAN
DEAR BOY! DO I COME ON NOW? NO? I CAN'T HEAR AS WELL AS I USED TO. I CAN'T GET USED TO THIS EARPHONE
I'D LIKE TO THANK BBC1 AND ALL YOU WONDERFUL PEOPLE FOR LETTING ME INTRODUCE YOU ON THIS WONDERFUL EVENING. I'D LIKE TO THANK MY MOTHER.....
AND THE WINNER OF THE BEST LEADING ACTOR IS.. THERE'RE SO MANY GREAT GUYS OUT THERE.. GULP!. GIGGLE.. JAMIE BELL
LIZ COULDN'T MAKE IT TONIGHT AS SHE DIDN'T HAVE A THING NOT TOWEAR
MY LORDS LADIES AND AMERICANS... IT IS MY EROTIC DESTINY... I'VE SPLIT MY GENES.. HO.. HO... WE MOVE ON LIKE FRESHLY BUTTERED CHOIR BOYS...(SIC) TIMES BLADDER PRESSES....
ORANGE
AND THE BEST CASTING COUCH AWARD SHOULD GO TO...
DOES MY BAFTA LOOK BIG IN THIS?
SNAP!
I'VE JUST SPENT SOME TIME WITH EMINEM TO GIVE ME SOME CRED
ELTON JOHN JOKE
I'M A PLASTIC SURGEON, AND I'M JUST CHECKING MY HANDI-WORK
HE SHOULD JOIN DWIGHT WATCHERS
I GOT MY DRESS AT A NEW SHOP CALLED THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES
UNFORTUNATELY I CAN BE HERE WITH YOU WONDERFUL PEOPLE TONIGHT.... WHEN I FIRST STARTED IN THIS CRAZY WORLD WE CALL SHOWBUSINESS.... ON AN' ON
FOOT AND MOUTH HAS BROKEN OUT IN THE STALLS!
HEY! YOU BITCH! WE'VE BOTH GOT THE SAME BOOBS!

THE Sun

THE PAPER THAT BACKS OUR BOYS IN BLUE

Friday, March 9, 2001

# IS DANDO KILLER GUILTY?



by Sun Staff **E. Diddit**

**TRIUMPHANT police today released the first official picture of the man they believe could well be guilty of the murder of TV's Jill Dando.**

Is he guilty? Well, just think of all the other killers who have stood in the same dock pleading their innocence: Jack the Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe and Adolf Hitler. Know what we mean?

**ON OTHER PAGES How He Did It 8 More Pictures of the Monster 11-13 Full Court Report: Not in this paper**

# BULGER CASE LATEST

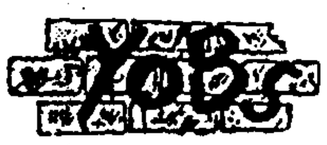
**HANDWRITING experts have analysed a two-thousand-word article about James Bulger's killers exclusively smuggled out of "The Sun", and they have revealed some disturbing findings.**

"The person who wrote this was clearly dysfunctional, ill-at-ease with normal society, and is unlikely to feel remorse for all the terrible articles they've written in the past," he said. "It's obvious to me a very nasty person wrote these words."

*DUBLIN DASH*
3 days/ 1 night
Bed and Breakfast
JUST £59.95 per person
*Travelscope Promotions, Hereford Admag*

Cyprus Long Stay Winter Break

*Newmarket Air Holidays*



HUSBAND

Oi stop... You can't come in here!
Why not?
Because of foot and mouth disease The countryside is closed
Well where are we supposed to shag, then?!

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## (Han-z-z-z-ard)

### 3.17 Agricultural Questions

**The Speaker** (Mr James McGorbals): Auchter! Auchter! Muchtygangyawillyawathe noo!

**Mr Nick Brown** (Newcastle Brown, New Lab): As the minister of agriculture, I would like to tell the House that this Government is doing everything it can to stamp out this dreadful disease of foot and mouth as soon as possible with all the means at our disposal.

**Timnicebutyeo** (Lovechild North, Con): I would like to say that the Conservative Party is entirely behind the Government in its efforts to stamp out this dreadful disease as soon as possible and with all the means at its disposal.

*(Lab and Tory MPs "Hear, hear, aren't we all marvellous?")*

**Speaker**: Yegangmuckleweejimmyshandand hisband!

**Sir Bufton Tufton** (Lymeswold, Con): Would the right honourable gentleman care to elaborate on his statement?

**Newcastle Brown**: How dare the Hon. Member waste my time with such a pathetic question, trying to make cheap party political points over a major national tragedy. Everyone knows the blame for this crisis lies squarely at the door of 200 years of Tory misrule.

*(Tory MPs "Moo, moo, moo!")*

**Sir Bufton**: With all due respect to the Rt Hon gentleman, I just thought it might be rather a good idea if the House of Commons were to find ten minutes of time to discuss why it is that the whole country has been brought to a standstill.

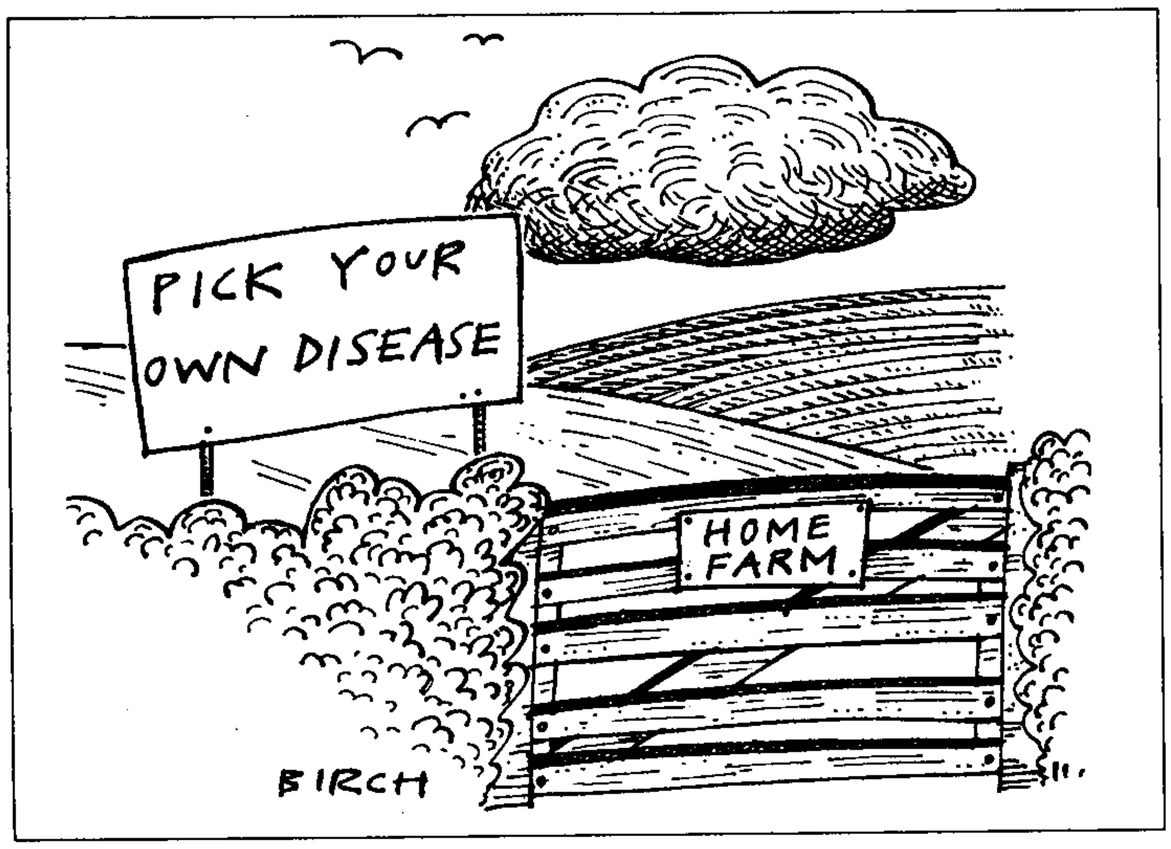
**Brown**: You people make me sick. Do you think I've got nothing better to do than to stand here and be insulted? Frankly, I've got some important interviews to give to the PM programme, Channel Four News and Radio Tyneside's Drivetime News and Weather Roundup, so I can't hang around here talking to a lot of silly, self-important little MPs.

*(Labour cheers, Tories cries of "Baa, baa, baa!")*

**Patsy Jacket** (Hayley Mills, Staffs): I would just like to congratulate the minister on the wonderful way he has handled this whole debate, by not having one.

**Mr Speaker**: Ochaye,aweedramaforeyegang, drfinlayscasebookpetermckaydonaldwheresyourt rouserpress!

*(At this point, Black Rod entered with a large pile of straw, and after spraying everyone with disinfectant, declared that the House was now an "Exclusion Zone" and would be closed until further notice.)*




THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

# Letters to the Editor

## Foot and Mouth – Who Is To Blame?

SIR – It is quite obvious to anyone who understands the meat industry that the cause of this dreadful plague must be foreign food illegally imported into Britain by Argentinian meat barons desperate to destroy Britain's thriving beef industry. Is it too much to ask Mr Blair and President Bush to send in the bombers to give Johnnie Argie a taste of his own beef?
**Sir Hector Spam**, Chairman Spam Marketing Board, Little Frittering.

SIR – It is absolutely obvious to anyone who knows the countryside that the only way the scourge of foot and mouth could have been introduced into Britain was by crazed animal rights activists importing test tubes of the virus from South African laboratories and spraying it at night on the revolving sails of windfarms so that it can be spread across thousands of hectares in a few minutes.
**Clarissa Dickson-Wrong**, Fatladies Road, Bristol.

SIR – To anyone who knows anything about ufology, it is abundantly obvious that the horrifying epidemic of foot and mouth must have been brought to earth from outer space, either by a passing asteroid or in the waste disposal of an unidentified flying object, probably from the Planet Krypton. It can surely be no coincidence that in recent years so many corn circles should have appeared on British fields and so close to our beloved Highgrove.
**The Prince of Wales**, Highgrove, Mars.

SIR – I blame the politicians because they've all had their foot in their mouth for years.
**Mike Giggler**, via e-mail.

SIR – We have been here before. On August 13 1837, the Farmers' Gazette reported that "five fine hogs, the propertie of Mistress Elizabeth Wheatcroft of Great Sked in the County of Lincs did look right poorly come market time." And sure enough *(cont'd. p. 94)*



*"I said all along it was cheaper to shoot the farmers"*

# News in Brief

## FOOT AND MOUTH LATEST

**AS FOOT and mouth disease continues to spread across the country, many farmers in areas yet to be affected say they now fear the worst.**

"Yes, there's a very real risk now that my livestock won't contract the disease," said one anxious pig farmer, "and that means I won't get compensation for going out of business, and I'll have to continue working for the next twenty years selling my livestock at market for the equivalent of a packet of crisps.

"It really is the nightmare scenario."

# POETRY CORNER

**In Memoriam Sir Donald Bradman, cricketing legend**

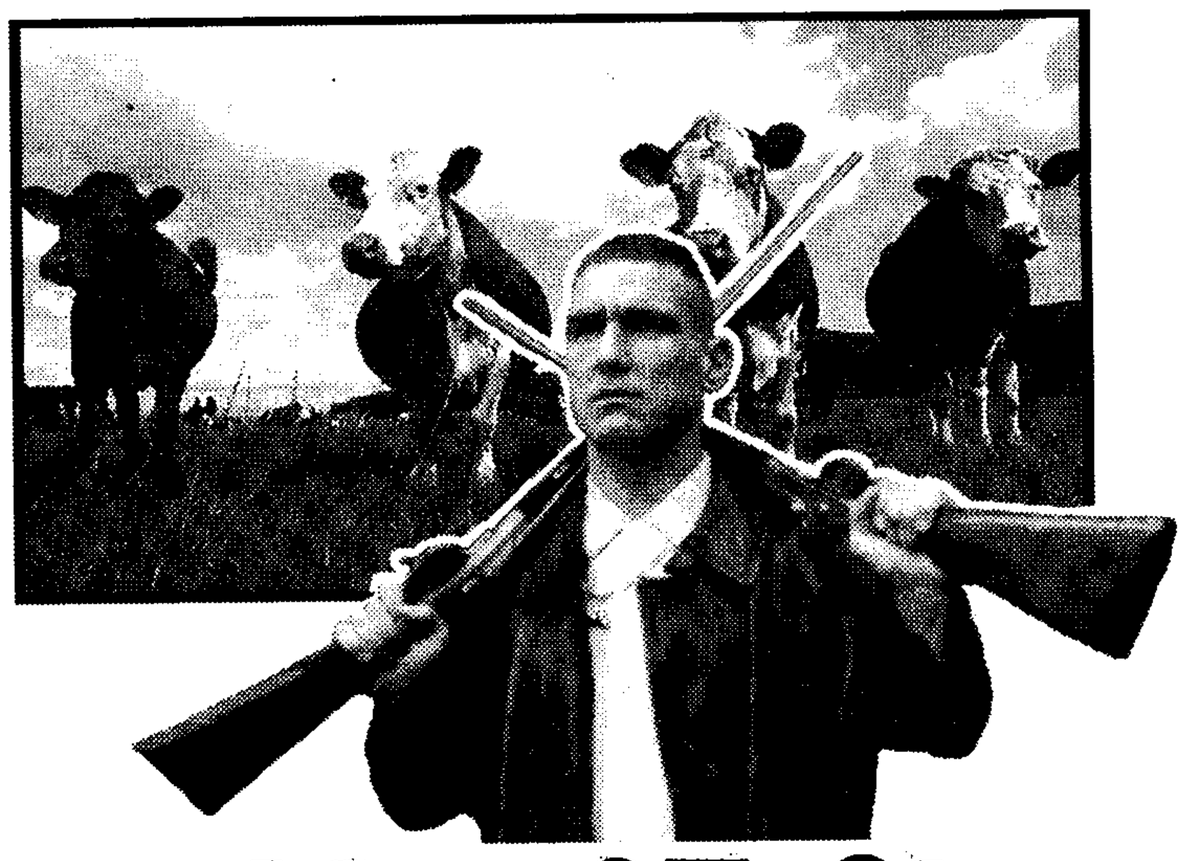
So. Farewell then
Donald Bradman.
Famous Australian
Cricketer.

92 was a good innings.
But, let's face it,
100 would have been
Nearer your
Average.

E.J. Swanton-Thribb
(17½ not out)

*"We discovered another loophole in the regulations"*

Advertisement



Live SToCk
& Two SmokiNg BarrEls

COMING SOON TO AN AREA NEAR YOU

# What You Didn't Miss

## THE TODAY PROGRAMME

### ASH WEDNESDAY

**Sue McGhastly** *(for it is she)*: ...and with another confirmed case in Lymeswold, we go over to our reporter Phil Airtime,who is standing with his mobile watching a huge mass of dead animals being burnt in Northumbria. Phil, I imagine you can see a dense pall of smoke. Is that right?

**Phil**: That's right, Sue. From where I'm standing, I can see a dense pall of smoke.

**McGhastly**: I suppose the stench must be pretty appalling? You must be feeling pretty sick?

**Phil**: That's right, Sue. From where I'm standing, the stench is pretty appalling. It's really enough to make you sick.

**McGhastly**: And what's the feeling like, round the funeral pyre? Are the local farmers feeling suicidal? Are they likely to throw themselves into the flames, as they see their stock and their livelihood literally going up in smoke?

**Phil**: That's a very good description of the scene I'm witnessing, Sue. I wish I had your gift for words.

**McGhastly**: That's right, Phil.

**Jim Naughtiebutnice**: I'll have to stop you there, Sue, because we're just getting news of a terrible train crash in Yorkshire.

**McGhastly**: Oh, I'll take this one, Jim. *(Sound of struggle over paper)* Yes, it seems that there's been a terrible train crash in Yorkshire. We haven't got any details as yet, but we've got someone on the spot, our reporter, Paddy Tout. Paddy, what can you tell us about this terrible train crash?

**Tout**: Well, we haven't got any details as yet, but I can see a train sort of off the rails.

*(Sound of siren in background)*

**McGhastly**: That noise in the background, that must be the emergency services rushing to the scene?

**Tout**: That's right, Sue. From where I'm standing, I can see the emergency services rushing to the scene.

**McGhastly**: That must mean there've been casualties. From where you're standing, Paddy, can you see any, er, casualties coming out of the windows of the carriages?

**Tout**: You mean dead bodies, Sue? That's what you normally ask.

**McGhastly**: That's right, Paddy. I know it's too early to speculate, but who do you think we can blame for this appalling tragedy? Railtrack must be high on the list, mustn't it?

**Tout**: That's right, Sue, but it's obviously too early to speculate.

**McGhastly**: Thank you, Paddy, and obviously, as soon as we have news of any dead bodies, we'll be keeping you up to date on our website at www.bbc.aargh.co.uk. Jim?

**Naughtiebutnicebutdim**: It's now time for *Thought For The Day*, which comes from our Bognor Regis studio with Bishop Leslie Pilchard, the Chief Atheist. Bishop?

**Pilchard**: To many of us, Donald Bradman was a legend. But when you hear about this foot 'n' mouth disease, you think *(cont. 94kHz)*

# CLEESE LASHES BBC

by Our TV Sketch Staff, **Ed Parrot**

**TV FUNNYMAN John Cleese launched a blistering attack on BBC executives last night, accusing them of being incompetent, hopeless and unable to deal with talented people.**

"They just don't know what they're doing," said Mr Cleese. "They presented me with this idea for a TV documentary series on the Human Face, and then had the nerve to give me a lot of money and show the programme on BBC television.

"In the old days," he continued, "the BBC would never have allowed a factual series to be presented by someone responsible for those embarrassing Sainsbury's advertisements."

Mr Cleese is no more, he has ceased to be funny, he is an ex-Python *(cont. p. 94)*

# TEN YEAR CRIME PLAN LATEST

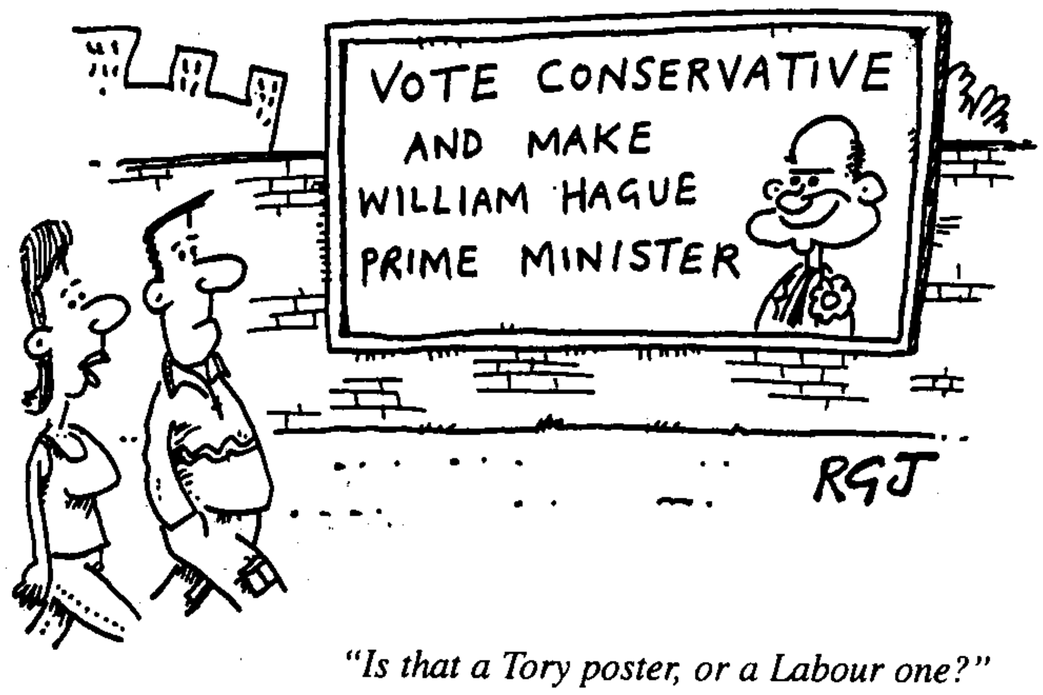
by Our Crime Correspondent **Hans Upp**

**THE GOVERNMENT today revealed a ten-year plan to crack down on the amount of crackdowns.**

"The number of these panicky crime crackdowns was already rising under the Conservatives," insisted a Number 10 source, "but rather than decrease as we'd hoped under Jack Straw they've actually increased dramatically.

"Hardly a day goes by when the public isn't assaulted with half-baked proposals like 24-hour courts, drug dealers' registers and private patrols replacing police on the beat."

Despite the announcement, law and order campaigners still urged the elderly to make sure their doors are locked securely to prevent New Labour MPs gaining access to their homes during the election campaign to tell them of all the new schemes they've got to cut crime.




*"Is that a Tory poster, or a Labour one?"*

## ME AND MY SPOON

### THIS WEEK

### CAROL VORDERMAN

**On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate your spoons?**

I think about five or six. I wouldn't put it higher than that.

**Do you prefer modern spoons or the more traditional kind?**

It depends very much on what kind of mood I'm in.

**Do you remember what was the last spoon you bought?**

Oh yes. Peter Jones Spoon Department 1998. Or it might have been 1997.

**And can you tell us more about it?**

It was Danish-designed, with very simple lines. And it was one of a set of six.

**Do you think spoon design has gone as far as it can go?**

Heavens no. I'm sure there are all sorts of exciting spoons coming out all the time. In Japan, for example.

**Do you think of spoons as status symbols?**

Some people might, but as far as I'm concerned, spoons are spoons. It's probably my Northern upbringing!

**As a mathematician, have you ever counted up all your spoons?**

That's a good question. But no, I can't say I have done.

**Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?**

No.

*NEXT WEEK: P.D. James.*

## Traditional British Folk Sayings No. 94

*Red sky at night*
*Cattle alight,*
*Red sky in the morning*
*We haven't finished yet*
**(Anon)**

# DIARY

ANDREW NEIL

A straitjacket, huh? Untrue, inaccurate and typically snide. They say it's a straitjacket I'm wearing. Yes, it's the blethering classes up to their old tricks again.

So, I'm sitting in a padded cell, trussed up in an old straitjacket, am I?

The same old false, malevolent lies peddled by third-rate so-called media journalists – motivated by nothing more than a desire to smear and tarnish an international jet-setting multi-media moghul with a proven track record of success in every field.

Talk about the cess-pits of gutter journalism. Let's get a few facts straight for once, shall we? Not an activity those guys know much about.

**FACT**. I am not sitting in a padded cell. I am standing.

**FACT**. I am not trussed up in an old straitjacket. Sorry, guys. Wrong again. The straitjacket in question is a highly fashionable garment purchased from a top-flight international company at great speed via the internet – with my trademark red braces painted on by a prestigious young artist.

**FACT**. Contrary to media tittle-tattle I am not "at the end of my tether". Wrong again. I am not even at the beginning of my tether. Nor have I "gone bananas". Check the records, guys. The banana is a fruit of which I have never been fond. If you must know, I despise any fruit that bursts when you hit it with a fist.

**FACT**. I have not been "put away". I have come to this secluded luxury accommodation with designer-padding for a well-earned rest, ready for a major re-launch of our operations in the Spring, and again in the Summer and Autumn.

A warning. My short absence should not encourage my managers and editors to take it into their silly little heads to start putting their feet up. No way. If we relax for a single second, the toffee-nosed brigade will be onto us, beating us to the death with their vicious silver spoons. There's nothing the Establishment would like to see more than the whole lot of us floating in a cesspit of their own making, begging for mercy.

But we're not going to give them that satisfaction. No way.

Let me assure you of one thing. If they want to attack us, okay, but they should know this. We're armed and extremely dangerous.

My under-managers, clad in their fresh Armani-style white coats, assure me that my accommodation is soon to be equipped with computers, fax machines, printers, telephones, satellite TV and the very latest in high-speed internet connections. This will be my Mission Control. Double the cover price. Half the editorial budget. Give readers a taste of their own medicine. Yes – we're onto a winner.

From here, I will plot cunning new price-cuts and promotional pushes for all our titles – ready to silence the hoity-toity anti-British chinless brigade of Stalinist groupies and their envious nose-in-air cohorts.

In a fortnight's time, we will be offering £5 notes free with Monday's Scotsman – on condition that readers accept a further £10 free with our sister-paper Sunday Business. And once we have lured them in, we have high hopes of retaining their loyalty by enclosing a further £20 with each new copy. And let me tell you this. We expect circulation to reach an all-time high. So much for our enemies.

Ouch!

The Scotsman – still attracting new readers to replace the old ones who we didn't want anyway and who can go stuff themselves up their own backsides for all the good it'll do them, see if we bloody care.

Sunday Business – the newspaper that's fast becoming compulsory reading for all our staff.

Small wonder my old boss Rupert Murdoch is running scared!

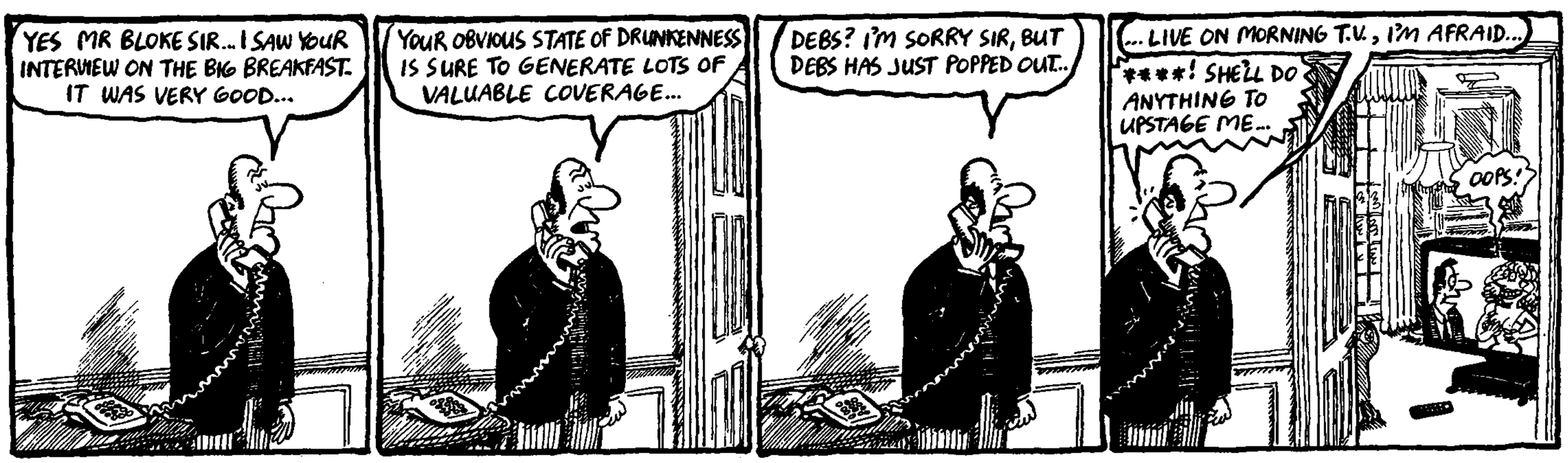
Outside the window with its designer-bars, I hear a bird singing. Sadly, it's a bird of the feathered variety! Personally, I prefer my birds in micro-bikinis, sitting at tables within easy viewing distance, so that their Uncle Andy can observe them at leisure through his state-of-the-art binoculars clad in his executive khaki balaclava and mink posing-pouch! No doubt this may offend the forces of political correctness, but see if I care. But for the time being I'm landed with this bird singing its selfish and envy-filled tunes. Take it from me, birds only sing if they're frightened. And if they're frightened, they attack. Again and again. This particular member of the twittering classes is obviously out to get me. It's envy, that's what it is – envy that I've managed to establish an effective power base from which to take on the combined might of the snobbish London establishment and the Edinburgh blethering classes. But let me tell the little birdy this much for free. If it flies through those bars, we'll bite its head off. And that should put an end to its tittle-tattle!

The toffee-nosed doctors drop by with their so-called medications. They take off my metal visor. Then they ask me who the Prime Minister is. That old ploy! In a second, I tell 'em it's Margaret Thatcher. That silences them! Before they can open their mouths for the next round of so-called questions, I take the wind out of their snooty closed-shop sails. I ask them if they realise who they are dealing with. I tell them that for their information I am Andrew Neil, editor-in-chief of the Sunday Times, Chairman of Sky/TV, right-hand-man to Rupert Murdoch, in-demand fearless media pundit and hard-working, hard-playing all-round man about town – and circulation is booming!! Wise up, guys, I say! Get a life! Don't you know this is the 1980s?

*As told to*
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


YES MR BLOKE SIR... I SAW YOUR INTERVIEW ON THE BIG BREAKFAST. IT WAS VERY GOOD...
YOUR OBVIOUS STATE OF DRUNKENNESS IS SURE TO GENERATE LOTS OF VALUABLE COVERAGE...
DEBS? I'M SORRY SIR, BUT DEBS HAS JUST POPPED OUT..
... LIVE ON MORNING T.V., I'M AFRAID...
****! SHE'LL DO ANYTHING TO UPSTAGE ME...
OOPS!

# Literary Review

## Happy campus...

**Thinks**
David Lodge
*(Secker & Warburg, £16.99)*

FUNNY things, literary reputations. The unanimous discovery that ex-Professor Lodge is now one of our senior novelists is not without its ironies. Chill critical winds blew around one or two of his more recent productions — *Paradise News* (1991) and *Therapy* (1995), for example — and one or two truculent ingrates were positively uncharitable about the warmed-up stage play that became the novella *Home Truths* (1999). Curiously, though, with the appearance of *Thinks*, the critical undergrowth is a-rustle with encomia: admiring profiles in the *Guardian* and the *Independent*; a whole page of lapidary back-patting from Joyce Carol Oates in the *TLS*; Peter Kemp laying it on with a king-size trowel in the *Sunday Times*. Where has all this come from? And what does it mean?

A line or two of context may be appropriate here. The highlight of Malcolm Bradbury's memorial service, which took place last month in Norwich Cathedral, was a moving tribute from David Lodge. Co-workers in the literary vineyards for 40 years, the two often seemed to operate by way of a sort of symbiosis, and Lodge reprised the well-known story of the time he was telephoned by a baffled punter who believed that he and Bradbury were the same person.

Yet the parallel nature of their twin universes *does* seem sharply evident in their latest — and in Bradbury's case, last — offerings.

Bradbury's swansong *To The Hermitage* (Picador, £16) contrasts the life of the Enlightenment *philosophe* Denis Diderot with a modern-day computerised knowledge project. *Thinks* contrasts enigmatic old-fashioned human emotion with the advances in artificial intelligence and the mappings of the human mind. Coincidental, isn't it?

Set at the "University of Gloucester" — fictitious, though horribly like the UEA in appearance — *Thinks* features a distinguished fortysomething novelist named Helen Reed, in mourning for her adored BBC producer husband, who takes a job as creative writing fellow. Star colleague is the fiftyish academic glamour boy Ralph Messenger (I think we can take it that the names are symbolic), director of the campus's centre for Cognitive Science. Eyed up by lickerish Ralphie, Helen initially resists. Some classic Lodge oppositions are swiftly wheeled into place: naivety vs. sophistication; morality vs doing what you like; faith (Helen is not wholly lapsed Catholic) vs. unbelief; and, amid the dialogues of status-conscious academics and some literary parodies (Amis jr, Rushdie etc) courtesy of Helen's creative writing students, does anything sound at all familiar?

Senior novelists tend to tread familiar pavements, of course. I mean, we can't all be the late Anthony Burgess. Just as P.D. James is still casting her eye over those Suffolk theological seminaries, so the campus is still Lodge's metaphorical ball and chain. This isn't to denigrate a painstaking attempt to stay up-to-date — Helen assuming that the student chat about "Zola" betokens an interest in the French novel, references to the 1997 general election and an internet paedophile sub-plot. Everything is tremendously well plotted and laid out — the blast from the past that disturbs Helen's fond marital memories, Messenger's glimpse of mortality — and yet the veneer of modernity very seldom disguises the old-fashioned nature of what lies beneath.

Post-war English literature of the kind that Bradbury and Lodge represented is almost gone: Lodge survives as its figurehead.

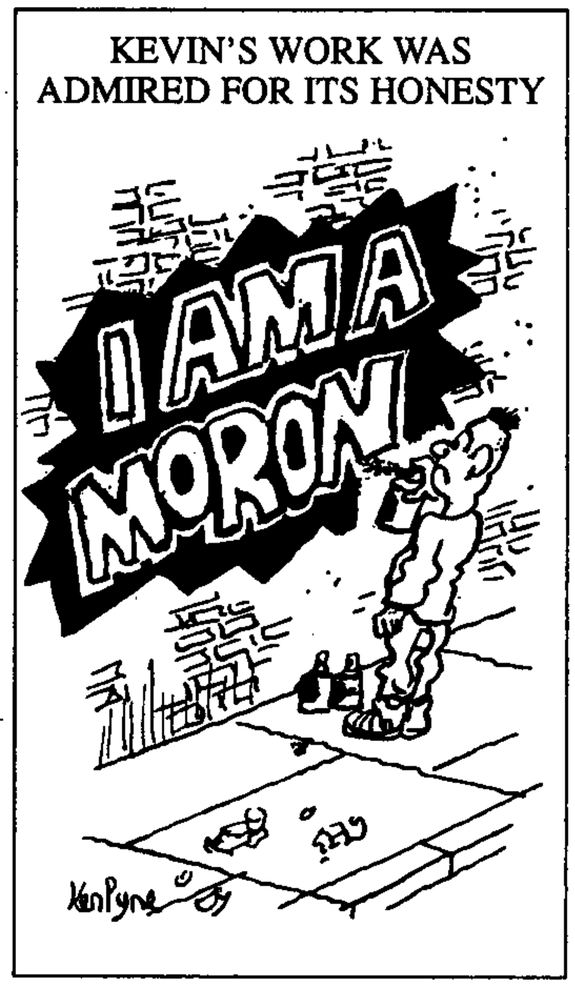
## ...and a load of rap

**Angry Blonde**
Eminem
*(ReganBooks, £14.99)*

*Angry Blonde* is the biography of Eminem. "Parental Advisory, Explicit Content" says the cover, putting it firmly on every recalcitrant yoof's most-wanted list.

"Explicit" is obvious. One need not quote the lyrics. Suffice to say that if you string together five of the rudest things you can possibly think of, stand on a street corner and exhort kids to do them, you've got the point. The mystery is "Content": there appears to be none.

In 148 pages, 67 of them are pictures, most of which are reprints from Eminem's albums. Then there are complete lyrics, printed in barmy typefaces to indicate that




this guy is, like, unhinged — so unhinged he can't even print straight, man — but again, whatever you think of them they are all available on the internet to proper fans; in fact proper fans know them all by heart anyway. So again, largely redundant.

Finally, every now and then Em gives some spiel explaining how this or that song came to be written, along the lines of: "Well, I came up with the hook on the john one day while I was high and then went down the studio and laid down the track. And fuck you if you have a problem with that."

Tack on a foreword from one of the editors of *The Source* magazine (not sadly MC Foden of the *Guardian* or the *Spectator*'s Big Daddy Delingpole), an intro from the Em himself (written with the help of someone else, natch) and, er...that's it.

As biogs go, literary history contains few that can have told you less about anything whatsoever than this. I read it in one hour, which at £14.99 for the privilege works out at 30p a minute. Both time and money would be better spent getting a sandwich or a lobotomy.

Of course we asked for this. If there are two (and I use the word in its loosest sense) "themes", they are that Eminem doesn't want us to take the lyrics seriously, and that even if we do, he "Just don't give a fuck". (The latter becomes, *pace* Giles Foden, *Guardian* deputy lit. ed., somewhat of an *idée fixe*, later embellished in some elegant recapitulations including "Still don't give a fuck", and "Fuck the Planet".) Both of these central tenets of his thought have, strangely, been roundly ignored by all pundits everywhere.

Worst of all, not one jot of this critical hokum is new. Back in 1992 Ice-T (black) refused to print his lyrics on an album cover because "every rhyme I write/ is gonna be analysed by someone white".

And the songs themselves? Well, if you want you can hark back to those happy days of prac crit and punting, and trawl through the lyrics looking for examples of anaphora, catachresis and reworkings of the Petrarchan *canzone*. But you can do that with a bus ticket; and frankly, bro, structuralism is so *passé*.

## Books & Bookmen

■ ONE of the most touching spectacles at the British Book Awards – the Nibbies – was Anthony "Fatty" Cheetham dancing attendance on Scottish crime novelist Ian Rankin, a star in the Orion constellation and a nominee for author of the year.

This was an altogether happier situation than that which occurred at the Booker prize ceremony, when Fatty barged in on a conversation between Rankin and Alain de Botton, who was on TV pundit duty that night. Failing completely to recognise Rankin, he brown-nosed de Botton vigorously. It was only when someone later asked Fatty why he hadn't said much to Rankin that he realised he'd been blanking one of his best-selling authors.

The next day, all butter and oils, he telephoned the creator of Inspector Rebus, reassured him of his importance and then flew up to Edinburgh to give the slighted author the star treatment. His keenness to make good his error may have something to do with the fact that Transworld, HarperCollins and various others have recently been playing a game of "Who's got the biggest cheque?" in an attempt to lure Rankin from Orion.

■ OXFORD University Press has just lost its charitable status in a hearing at the Delhi supreme court, a detail recorded with great glee by Andrew Malcolm's website www.akme.btinternet.co.uk.

The OUP now owes back tax there from the 1970s. Quite apart from the fact that, in Malcolm's words, "the sums involved may yet add up to a sizeable leak in the All Souls port supply", the Delhi ruling may prompt Britain and America to look afresh at the anomalous charity status that they continue to grant the Press.

■ SO Tim Waterstone has "retired" as HMV Media chairman. Does this mean his much-parlayed bid for the company could finally be underway?

Whatever the outcome, the chain is still a thorn in the side of the small publishers who found themselves facing punitive demands from Waterstone's for a 50 percent discount late last year. Trevor Habeshaw, of the small academic publisher Technical & Educational Services, has written to the *Eye* informing us that Plymbridge Distributors – the firm used by T&ES – has received only £66,637 of the £172,000 it was due from Waterstone's in January. "This is the third time in the last 18 months that Waterstone's have failed to pay their bills," he adds.

In fact it emerges that the chain is behaving even more shabbily than first appears. Part of the shortfall – more than £30,000 – is made up by "variances", which is the difference between the distributor's invoiced price and the price Waterstone's feels it should be paying.

In this case Waterstone's has reduced Plymbridge's invoiced total to include the 50 percent discount, whether the individual publishers agreed to it or not. While the kerfuffle is sorted, Plymbridge and its clients face potentially disastrous cashflow problems through no fault of their own.

## WORSTSELLERS

*Class Act* by Lynda Lee-Potter
(Metro)

■ THE hype: According to the jacket blurb, it "mixes autobiography with witty and pungent social analysis, as well as advice for anyone who wants to move through the class system... a compelling guide to the realities of class today... a highly entertaining and provocative read". It was also plugged ceaselessly in the *Daily Mail*, the paper for which Glenda writes.

The sales: Dismal, as far as can be ascertained, and certainly not the saviour Metro was hoping for. Scheduled for early September, it emerged later due to financial difficulties with the printer. When it actually came out, it failed to register in Whitaker Booktrack's weekly new entries chart throughout September and October, which suggests that it sold, at best, less than 1,000 copies in its first week, and possibly less than 263, in a market that saw even *School Recorder Books: Book One* – a ten year-old musical textbook for schools – achieving 267 sales.

*'Bookworm'*

# Hannibal Lecteur

THERE is something almost touching about the eagerness of British reviewers to follow the trend of the moment. Pronouncing week by week about who is in and who is out, they move together with the brainless precision of a team of synchronised swimmers.

Then, just occasionally, a book like Sylvia Smith's *Misadventures* comes along which throws them into a complete panic. They all agreed that the memoirs of a dreary-sounding middle-aged woman were banal and badly written; the question was whether they fell into that tricky so-bad-it's-good category. Was the book's very dullness a subtle postmodern joke? If so, who was the joke on?

Reviewers agreed with the author's modest assessment of her talents – "I think it's amazing the fuss that's being made about a book... If I'd written something startling, I could understand, but I haven't," she confessed in the *Times* – but then worried nervously whether its very lack of distinction made *Misadventures* so, er, exceptional.

The writing was "awful" and there was nothing in the way of style, description, character or insight, according to Susan Jeffreys in the *Independent*; yet, because it was "true to the material", it was "a little masterpiece." It was "almost hypnotically bad," agreed Hephzibah Anderson in the *Daily Mail* — that was why it was "cult reading". The *Daily Telegraph*'s Helen Brown praised the book's "brilliantly deadpan vignettes" and then made the mistake of quoting some of them.

In fact, only Lynne Truss in the *Sunday Times* has dared to say that Smith was simply "a bad writer with nothing to say". Clearly, a bestselling author in the making.

To judge by the month's new fiction, Tony Parsons and Nick Hornby have much to answer for. Following the success of *Man and Boy* and *About a Boy*, Jonathan Coe, Toby Litt and Hanif Kureishi have all been playing variations on the theme of boyhood, to which several critics have responded in an appropriately adolescent fashion.

"Toby or not Toby?" joked Thomas Hodkinson, reviewing Litt's deadkidsongs for the *Independent on Sunday*, later making an embarrassingly obvious bid for a place on the paperback cover with "Just William meets A Clockwork Orange in this Goldin-esque tale of prepubertal angst and cruelty."

Coe receive mixed reviews but few have been as confusing as Anna Shapiro's in the *Times*. "As a novelist who finds it easier to set up characters as comic targets than to open them up to sympathetic exploration, I sense here a fatal combination: the desire to take on depth... coupled with pressure to 'entertain'." Was Shapiro in a ghastly grammatical tangle or was this some kind of strange cry for help about her own writing? In which case, what was it doing here?

But some things in the literary world carry on much as usual. Fay Weldon repaid Nigel Planer's generosity in getting her a ticket for a play by giving his next novel an unashamed plug in her *Spectator* diary while, over in the *Independent*, John Walsh filed a lengthy, generous profile of David Lodge on the publication of his new novel. It seems like only last year that Lodge was giving Walsh's book *Falling Angel* a lengthy, generous review in the *Sunday Times*...

# Pseuds Corner

**You're standing in thigh-high grass that glimmers like brushed satin and stretches out voluptuously to the horizon, basking in birdsong and the wind's seaside whisper. Suddenly you hear a roar building behind you: a little bi-plane shoots overhead, throwing loops in the bright blue sky, showing off. You watch it, amazed. A couple of local kids tumble up and stare at it, then stare at you as if your nose is green. Three scraggy dogs follow them, barking maniacally. The noisy scene fills you with the desire to throw your head back and laugh at its absurdity, laugh until your stomach is stiff.**

**Picture that and you'll have a small idea of the joy waiting for you in NoahJohn's second album.**

**MADDY COSTA**
**Guardian**

*Integrating information, identity and arts projects, legible cities link destination to users in a complete movement and information system.*

**Bristol City Council/Adshel leaflet on 'Building Legible Cities' conference**

**Flushing in the Future: The Postmodern Toilet in the Changing Cultural Spaces of Domestic Everyday**

This lecture attempts to explore certain relationships between civility and society, perhaps in the spirit of Norbert Elias. Professor Allen Chun has chosen the unorthodox story of the Washlet toilet as an example. One should not equate the socially tabooed status of the toilet with its insignificance in other terms. Such avoidance is a function instead of the underlying relationships between bodily practices, domestic order and the technological and social capacity to regulate the above.

**Pacific Asia Cultural Studies**
**Forum lecture, Goldsmith's College, University of London**

It's hard to be single. We all had the experience of we could've married the guy who was the wrong guy for the sake of being married and we didn't. There is something noble in that and there is something noble in taking care of yourself and becoming fully *actualised* as a human being.

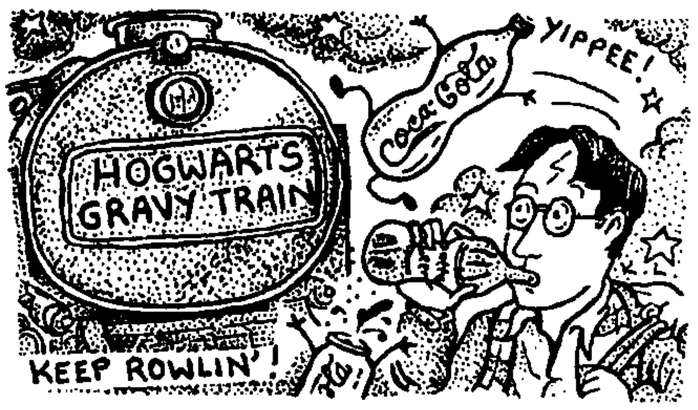
**CANDACE BUSHNELL**
**Spectrum [*Scotland on Sunday* Magazine]**

**Have you ever felt death? If you have you will understand fear – not of death itself but of the unknown. Loneliness is the place of fear, where it lives and breathes, a darkness, a heavy mass which resides upon the soul. Something ever threatening, like the great roar of a tidal wave, together against our control.**

**To lie there are night, dreaming of sleep – except our minds are filled with the vision of a napalm swirl, to be engulfed by loneliness, while the rest of the world carries on.**

**A hot summer's day, and as teenagers snog outside McDonald's; instead of disgust you are filled with envy, and loss. An old woman sits and cries while lovers walk by holding hands; this is the future. This is my fear...**
*[continues in this vein for another 500 words]*

**TRACEY EMIN (explaining why Edvard Munch's *The Scream* 'gets under her skin'), Guardian**




*Both Harry Potter and Coca-Cola reach deep into the heart of local communities around the world to add a little bit of magic to people's everyday lives. Bringing the two together creates a unique opportunity.*

**STEVE JONES (Chief marketing officer, Coca-Cola), Metro**

CONTRIBUTORS: Andrew Holmes, Deborah Keyser, Steve Cross, Rebecca Hardie, Charlotte Porter, Tony Soph.

**£10 paid for entries**

# IN THE BACK

# SO LONG, SOLOTEC

**TRAINING and Enterprise Councils, or TECs, were set up by the former Tory government to provide easy access to government money for employers who undertook minimum training obligations. The TEC councils were packed with important local businessmen. This story is about South London TEC (SOLOTEC), based in Bromley, and covering a wide area from Woolwich to Croydon.**

Two years ago, in May 1999, the SOLOTEC merged with another organisation, Business Link, and sadly bid farewell to its chief executive John Howell. Mr Howell got a golden handshake of £285,000 of public money.

When David Blunkett, the secretary of state for education and employment, heard about this pay-off, he denounced it. There was, he said, "no possible justification" for the payment; he ordered SOLOTEC to retrieve it and demanded that the board "consider its position".

The department for employment says that most of the board did resign, though the new chairman, a prominent Croydon solicitor and former chairman of the Law Society, Sir John Wickerson, stayed on. Mr Howell kept the £285,000 payment of public money that so shocked the secretary of state. The new chief executive John Saunders says the TEC was "legally bound" by his predecessor's contract to pay out every penny of the golden handshake.

Almost at once the SOLOTEC management embarked on a long, heroic campaign against three low-paid self-employed women who had worked for the TEC. Two days before the payment to Mr Howell was publicly announced, one of the women, Carole Hackett, was suddenly suspended without pay and without explanation. Month after month she was told that she would soon be reemployed, but she wasn't. Almost a year later, she got another job. In April last year she and her colleagues were served with papers from the TEC suing them for three quarters of a million pounds.

As she read the TEC's detailed claims set out by its solicitor, Batchelors, Carole could not believe her eyes. In the two years she worked for the TEC, she had been responsible for getting 280 long-term unemployed people trained and back to work. She had interviewed most of the workers herself, many of them in local job centres. She had provided detailed documentation in every case and again and again had been congratulated in writing by her senior officers for her hard and dedicated work.

The chief complaints against her were a) "irregularities" in the documents, which she fervently denies; and b) that she had not carried out the instructions in an "operational handbook" she had never seen.

A single parent on a low income, Carole engaged a Camberley solicitor, Julian Monk. He got an opinion for her from David Lord, a barrister, who told her she would easily win her case if she could get it to court, and would almost certainly succeed in her counterclaim for damages against the TEC.

At the end of October last year Mr Monk told her that legal aid had been refused and he could not afford to take her case further. He returned the papers. By then she was laid low by an illness which her doctors ascribed to the writ from the TEC. On 5 December last year she wrote to the SOLOTEC chairman Sir John Wickerson.

"The legal battle you have faced me with over the past 20 months," she wrote, "has taken me from being a happy, busy working mum to being so acutely depressed that I had a nervous breakdown and almost took my own life. The people that I worked with at SOLOTEC know in their hearts that this action is wrong. All of my assets are going or have gone in legal fees. If you wanted to destroy me you have succeeded. Please, please bring this action to a close."

Sir John wrote back on 15 December. "I have instructed our solicitors to get in touch with your solicitors to see whether there is any possibility of resolving these matters. I will continue to take a personal interest."

The outcome was another letter to Carole from Batchelors with the news that "our clients may be amenable to reaching an early settlement to bring the matter to a conclusion". All Carole Hackett had to do was to accept liability for the alleged fraud she utterly denies. If she did so, she was told, she would be means-tested to see what damages she should pay the TEC. She realised at once that if she accepted liability she was putting herself entirely at the mercy of the TEC and turned the offer down.

**Driven to the brink: Carole Hackett, one of three workers pursued by Solotec**

The case is now due for trial over several days this year and next. Carole has spent some £12,000 in legal fees, has lost her job and still has no solicitor. Mr Saunders tells the *Eye* that after "irregularities" had been identified in the documents, the TEC is "obligated to government funding" and has no alternative but to take action against their former employees. He was not clear about the cost of the legal action and could give no assurances that the TEC (and the taxpayer) would not lose money from the action. He emphatically denied that the writ against the three women had anything to do with the grotesque pay-off doled out to his predecessor.

**Staying on: Sir John Wickerson**

Asked whether it was in any way justifiable for the TEC to launch such an extensive and expensive legal action against three former workers who were not even properly employed, he replied: "Legal, moral and commercial considerations were all taken into account before starting this action." Like the other TECs, SOLOTEC ceases to exist at the end of the month. What a fine last action for it to make.

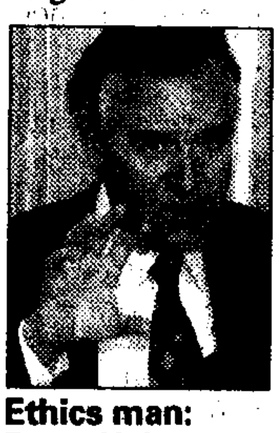
# DESERT WRONG

**AT last year's Labour party conference Peter Hain, then a foreign office minister, addressed a fringe meeting on "The case for more effective regulation of the arms trade".**

The meeting was sponsored by Amnesty International, BASIC, Christian Aid, International Alert, Oxfam and Saferworld. Richard Stanforth, of the Western Sahara Campaign, asked Hain why Britain was issuing arms licences to Morocco when Morocco was occupying the Western Sahara.

Hain told the meeting that while Britain sent arms to Morocco, he was not aware that any of them had been used in the Western Sahara, and that if anyone could prove to him that British weapons were being used there, he would take action.

Hain seemed genuinely to believe the kit wasn't being used against the Polisario (the guerrillas fighting the Moroccan regime) or their supporters. How strange, then, that his boss Robin Cook, the foreign secretary, revealed at a Commons joint select committee meeting at the end of January that one of the licences signed was for the parts and refurbishment of 30 105mm Howitzers. These are stationed along a huge sand wall known as the "Berm", right on the Western Sahara frontline. The guns have a range of 17 kilometres and can reach right into the disputed territory. Could Hain really have been unaware that this licence had been signed as he spoke?



**Ethics man: Peter Hain**

At the select committee Cook tried to argue that "there is no licence for the export of weaponry" because British Aerospace subsidiary Royal Ordnance is only supplying Howitzer parts and refurbishment rather than fresh guns. Cook also made much of the fact that the UN has authorised the sale.

The original licence application was in fact refused, but Royal Ordnance appealed. According to Cook: "In between our refusal and the hearing of the appeal, the United Nations in both Western Sahara and New York confirmed the refurbishment was within the terms of the ceasefire. They assessed the project as force neutral." Cook was unable to explain to MPs what "force neutral" meant. However, he believed "the ground for our refusal was rather removed by the UN removing any objection to it."

This gave the impression that the UN contacted the British government, urging it to sell the gun parts. In fact the government contacted the UN, at the urging of the weapons maker, to get authorisation for the deal. This novel method of deciding UK export licences, which are supposed to be made on our own "ethical" criteria, has surprised and irritated UN officials and British MPs.

# POLICE 5

**THE family of Harry Stanley, shot dead by police as he walked home after a pint of lemonade in his local, is to take the director of public prosecutions (DPP) to the high court in an attempt to force him to prosecute the two armed police officers involved.**

The officers had been given a report that the 46-year-old father of three was an Irishman carrying a sawn–off shot gun. In fact he was a Scottish painter and decorator recovering from cancer who was carrying a wooden table leg that had just been repaired.

The crown prosecution service (CPS) decided last year that the officers would not be prosecuted for manslaughter because even if they had dealt with the situation differently, "there is no evidence to suggest a different result would have occurred". The family suggests one obvious option would have been to observe Mr Stanley first and assess what risk if any he posed to anyone.

The family is also launching a challenge under n ew human rights legislation which says that when the state has killed there must be a "thorough and effective investigation" capable of leading to the identity and punishment of those responsible, including effective access of the relatives to the investigative procedure.

The Stanley family has been refused access to all evidence. Family members do not even know the identity of Mr Stanley's killers. Yet they do know from the CPS that some of the evidence is contentious. The CPS concluded that the scientific evidence would enable the prosecution to "disprove" aspects of the officers' accounts and that this "may lead a jury to conclude that the officers have lied about certain matters". It then went on to say that the scientific evidence alone did not disprove the officers' belief that that they were in immediate danger.

# MMR: DOUBLE TROUBLE?

**WHILE more GPs are turning against the controversial triple MMR vaccine in favour of single measles, mumps and rubella jabs given at intervals, it has emerged that doctors in one London health authority are being urged to give toddlers two doses of the MMR vaccine only three months apart.**

Nowhere else in the world are repeat doses of MMR being given at such close intervals to children aged between one year and 18 months. And as far as the *Eye* can ascertain there has been no trial to show it is safe to do so. Usually children are given the first MMR jab at around 12 to 15 months of age and the *second* one not until they are about to go to school.

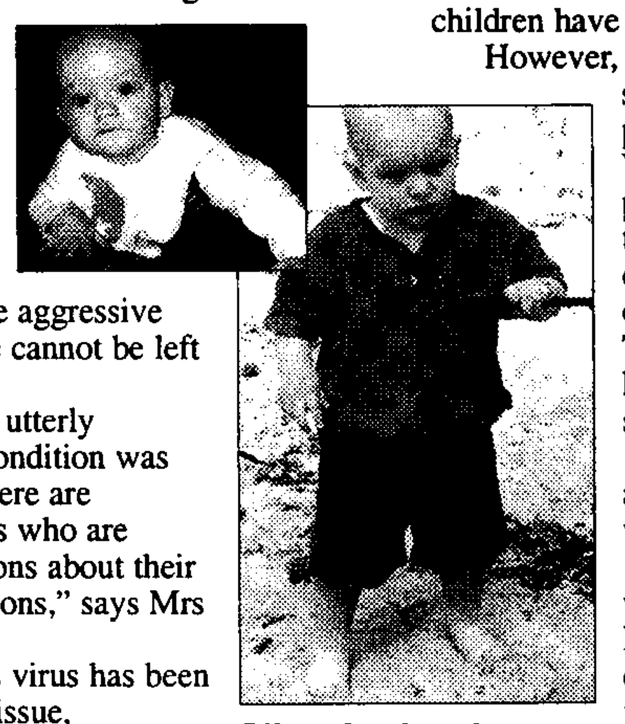
However, Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth health authority has embarked on the scheme to improve "herd" immunity. The swift second dose is supposed to catch the 10 to 15 percent of children who will not have become immune to measles mumps or rubella after the first jab.

The man behind the scheme is David Elliman, a consultant in child health at St George's hospital, Tooting, and the area's immunisation coordinator. He is also a keen proponent of MMR and an equally fierce critic of those who have raised doubts over the vaccine's safety. According to one of his research papers on concerns about immunisation, Elliman has also been sponsored to speak at educational meetings and has conducted research financed by vaccine manufacturers.

Last week he told the *Eye* that although he knew of nowhere else giving double MMR doses in this way, he had absolutely no safety concerns about the policy and there was to be no special monitoring. He said his concern was to stop the known potentially fatal and serious consequences of contracting measles, mumps or rubella and suggested intervals between the two MMR vaccines was for convenience not safety; any reaction to vaccines tended to be less the second time round; and health guidelines recommend a minimum gap of three months.

Other experts in the field are known to share Dr Elliman's views. However, the news has horrified parents, and a growing number of experts who believe the jab is responsible for triggering a devastating reaction in some children whose immune system cannot cope. Two are Cardiff pharmacists Julie and Peter Loch, whose four-and-a-half-year-old son Oliver has both the rare bowel disease and unusual regressive autism — identified by Andrew Wakefield when he first raised concerns about MMR two years ago (see *Eyes passim*).

At 14 months of age Oliver was a thriving toddler who had passed all the physical and developmental milestones. He then had his first MMR jab and within weeks started showing signs of both developmental and behavioural regression. His vocabulary slipped away and he was silent for nine or 10 months. He also started showing signs of serious bowel disorder. He became irritable and miserable and as he has grown older he has become more aggressive and more challenging. He cannot be left alone for a minute.



**Oliver Loch, whose health deteriorated greatly after the MMR jab**

"I am completely and utterly convinced that Oliver's condition was caused by MMR – and there are thousands of other parents who are reaching similar conclusions about their children's unusual conditions," says Mrs Loch.

Curiously the measles virus has been found in Oliver's bowel tissue, suggesting that far from giving Oliver immunity from the disease, the MMR vaccine (Oliver's only exposure to the virus) appears to have caused it to act abnormally in his body.

Oliver is not alone. Studies in Ireland, Japan, the US and the UK are currently uncovering the presence of a live measles virus in dozens of autistic and bowel diseased patients – cases which may yet prove the link between MMR, gut disease and regressive autism still so vehemently refuted by government health officials.

In the US Dr Vijendra Singh, of Utah State University, has also found that MMR appears to trigger an auto-immune reaction is some children which affects a protein, vital for the development of properly functioning brain cells. The good news for some families is that by adopting a strict diet, the effects on the brain can be reduced and in some cases the autistic symptoms reduced or reversed – but so far not unfortunately for Oliver. The bad news is that no one has yet found a way to rid the body of the measles virus.

"With the huge explosion in regressive autism in recent years, I think it grossly unfair, insulting and morally reprehensible to dismiss these observations as 'anecdotal'," says Mrs Loch. "If ministers are committed to reassuring the public of vaccine safety, then it [the government] should demonstrate clearly an alternative mechanism by which all of these children have fallen ill."

However, the government and health officials still appear determined to continue to pour scorn on the work of Andrew Wakefield while pouring £3m into a publicity campaign promoting the triple vaccine. They also appear determined to stop parents and doctors obtaining single vaccine alternatives. The London-based Direct Health 2000 has been told it can only obtain 25 single dose vaccines a month. It has 14,000 children on its books, each with a special need such as egg allergies, who need a single dose.

In the US, however, Wakefield's work is being taken far more seriously. He has already addressed a special congressional hearing looking into vaccine safety, and this week is due to make a presentation to the Institute of Medicines immunisation safety review committee, which is looking specifically at MMR and autism. Here in the UK, while he is being rubbished by the government's health mandarins and experts, the all-party parliamentary group on autism has also invited him to speak.

To cause further dismay, news of the double doses of MMR being administered by Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth health authority comes in the same month that MMR has been shown to be linked to a rare bleeding disorder in children.

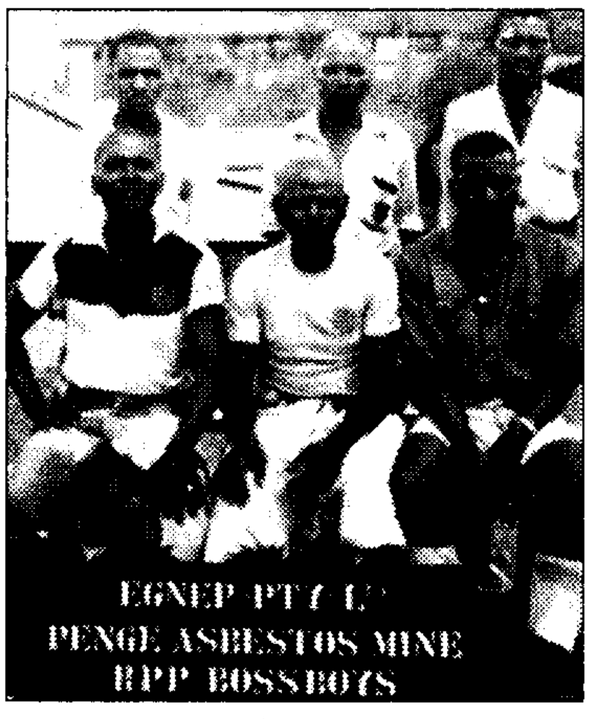
# CAPE OF BAD FAITH

**DOCUMENTS that have recently surfaced in South Africa show that Cape plc knew as long ago as 1962 that its huge asbestos mines were poisoning not only its workers but those unlucky enough to live nearby. The report was sat on for 20 years while asbestos factories and mills continued to spew out toxic dust.**

A large field study by the Johannesburg Pneumoconiosis Unit (partly funded by the mining industry) found "an alarmingly high" number of cases of mesothelioma, a rare lung cancer, among those living near the South African mines and concluded: "This condition is associated with exposure to asbestos dust inhalation which need not be industrial." It also found that residents were "in danger of contracting asbestosis — even though they have had no industrial exposure to asbestos dust".

Cape and others in the asbestos mining industry reacted by criticising the study, withdrawing funding and demanding that the report be kept confidential. For fear of attaching a "stigma" to the area which might "adversely affect future recruitment and the economy of the mining industry", amazingly the researchers agreed. They also agreed to change the name of their scaled down investigation from the "Mesothelioma Survey" to the benign "Investigation into Possible Air Pollution by Asbestos Dust".

Cape's group medical officer, who was sent to look at the mines and mills, was also critical of the dust discharging into the atmosphere and noted that "women are still employed on hand cobbing, sometimes accompanied by their children".



**The workers at Cape's asbestos mines in South Africa**

However, he said the company should not support further research because "it is well aware of the problem and had already some idea of its extent".

Meanwhile a group memo went out saying: "It is up to management to educate employees to scotch all rumours and wild talk on the general subject of asbestosis."

While Cape has settled claims from British workers injured in its UK factories, the recently surfaced documents promise huge embarrassment for the company as it continues to fight the group action brought by thousands of sick and dying black workers and residents elsewhere.

# TO CAP IT ALL...

**EDUCATION Leeds is the name of the new "venture company" formed by the government effectively to privatise public education in Leeds. Its chairman is also the chairman of Leeds United Football Club, so many of whose players are on trial for allegedly causing grievous bodily harm to an Asian student.**

The new company will be a "partnership" between Leeds city council, which will be represented on the board by the council's two deputy chief executives. The private sector is represented by Capita (aka Crapita) Strategic Education Services. Like so many newly-formed private education companies, Crapita has little or no expertise in running public education, and it is obliged to hire its top people from, er, public education.

Ian Harrison, one of the two Crapita directors on Leeds Education, is a former director of education at the London borough of Newham. The other Leeds Education director from Crapita is Parin Bahl, former deputy director of education at Newham council.

Crapita has made a speciality of hiring top people from despised public education services. In January, Nottingham council announced rather grudgingly that Paul Roberts, described as "the man who has spearheaded the campaign for better school standards in the city for almost four years", was leaving the council to join a private educational management consultancy. This is Strategic Education Services, which has been set up to support local educational authorities by, er, "the Capita consultancy".

*You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017*

# In the City

WHEN it comes to hypocrisy newspapers are on a planet all their own. MPs, lawyers, doctors and police officers are rightly pilloried on a regular basis for their manifest failures of self-regulation, necessitating the smack of firm, independent governance backed by the criminal law. But the screams of anguish and outrage when the same treatment is proposed for journalists know no bounds.

The public must be protected from rogue or negligent lawyers, incompetent or murderous doctors and bent or racist coppers – but no t, apparently, from corrupt or greedy journalists who can be a danger to readers', listeners' or viewers' wealth just as the others threaten life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

So it is no surprise that national newspapers have taken on the government over its expected and long overdue plan to make financial journalists declare if they have an interest in any shares they tip and punish those who do not. The move is a justified reaction to the *Mirror* scandal of the City Slickers, who happily bought and tipped in the company of their editor, senior *Mirror* executives and many colleagues.

To read the bleats of those Murdoch and Associated executives who oppose statutory controls, it would seem that City hacks are being asked to surrender the innermost secrets of their finances and that such an intrusion into personal privacy was unjustified given their Caesar's wife reputation. Yet these are the very standards by which these same protestors expect others – company directors, stockbrokers, bankers – to live. City pages regularly highlight evidence of conflicts of interest, especially regarding share dealing.

Iceland chairman Malcolm Walker is only the latest to pay the price for selling ahead of bad news. But Walker was only exposed because he had to disclose *all* his share dealings in Iceland – a change in the law more than 30 years ago introduced to prevent widespread abuse by directors. Journalists face no such enforced full disclosure of their investments. Only in the shares they tip.

The proposal finally to bring journalistic tipsters within the law is planned as an addition to the new financial services legislation due to come into effect later this year. It would bring City hacks under the control of the financial services authority (FSA) – rather than the limp-wristed regime of the press complaints commission (PCC) and their employers whose code of conduct was blithely and repeatedly ignored by *Mirror* journalists. Indeed, some appeared not to even know of or understand that code or even why it was wrong to buy shares ahead of the newspaper's readers.

Newspapers have successfully fought statutory control ever since it was proposed for the original financial services act almost 20 years ago. They may yet succeed in heading off this latest proposal ahead of an election when Labour will not want to pick a fight with the *Sun* and the *Mail*.

The alibis are already in place. Like every other self-regulator, the PCC and its powerful members declare that the latest scandal has sharpened everybody's awareness, that tougher new internal rules are in place and that the *Mirror* scandal will not happen again. Just leave us alone and we will rid the world of the few bad apples. Well that is not accepted when declared by doctors, lawyers or the police, so why should it be any more convincing when newspaper executives read from the same tired script?

Why should journalists be different to those whose sins they expose and castigate? Why should the PCC and newspapers' in-house rules be any more reassuring than those of the General Medical Council, the Law Society, the Bar Council or the Police Complaints Authority?

In that home of capitalism the United States, self-regulation long went out the Wall Street window. Those who give investment advice have to be regulated by the Securities & Exchange Commission. As a result US newspapers, other than specialist publications, tend to shy away from the kind of regular share-tipping which is so much a feature of British dailies and Sundays and which is at the heart of the temptations for journalists and those who provide their tips. The dangers have been well demonstrated by recent scandals involving the *Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week* and TV tipster Dan Dorfman.

British newspapers have a worse record stretching from the City editor who hanged himself in the 50s to the *Mirror* in the 90s, with scandals along the way at the *News of the World*, *Investors Chronicle*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*.

It would be naive to believe that City hacks turned their backs on the booming stock market of the 90s. More and more are investors directly, not just through pension funds or unit trusts. Many make no secret of their investments – inside the office. Some believe that putting their own money into the shares they tip is a sign of confidence for readers – not of course that readers are let into the secret.

*Eye* readers will recall how *Daily Mail* tipster Michael Walters recommended shares in which he had invested without any public disclosure. Others, it is suspected, continue to do the same. The *Independent* allowed "Changi Jim" Slater, a man who knew all about market abuse, to write a share tip column in which initially he did not disclose his holdings until this was questioned by the *Eye*. Slater then disclosed that – surprise, surprise – he did indeed hold shares he tipped. Nothing had changed from decades before when he abused the *Sunday Torygraph* in the same way.

The newspaper response is that journalists must declare their shareholdings to their editors/employers and must not tip shares they have just bought and intend to sell for a quick profit. But these disclosures are not available to the public unlike those of company directors or doctors who sit on medicine safety committees.

Also, even that internal transparency relies on honesty – which the *Mirror* scandal showed is in short supply among the greedy. And in the brave new world of paperless transactions it is not difficult to buy and sell shares without leaving any public trace using bank or broker nominee companies. Much of what takes place in newspaper offices is run on the basis of "don't ask, don't tell", despite what it says in employment contracts. And brokers will always be ready to accommodate journalists who help them out with puffs when they have shares to sell.

As for the PCC, look at the impact of its supposed toughest ever condemnation of *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan and the two already sacked Slickers Anil Bhoyrul and James Hipwell, who, it found, had dealt 16 and 25 times respectively off the back of *Mirror* readers.

**Stock Horror**

## Winners and losers at Vodafone

**Rewards since Vodafone acquired rival Mannesmann a year ago**

| £10m | £9.1m | Shareholders |
|---|---|---|
| Vodafone boss Chris Gent | Mannesmann boss Klaus Esser | - £82bn |

"Moron" is still in place. Bhoyrul has been paid either £15,000 or £24,000 (depending on who you believe) by the *Mirror* to keep silent and drop his unfair dismissal claim. Hipwell has embarked on a new career being paid to puff as well as lie. So much for self-regulation.

The opponents of the transparency they demand from others say it will be impossible to enforce the disclosure rules planned by the government. Why? If all share holdings are indeed disclosed to the City editor, why is it so difficult to put at the end of the item or column that either the author or members of the City staff hold shares in this company we have just tipped? No names just the *caveat emptor* word to the wise.

Whited sepulchres such as the *Guardian* or the *Times* could of course print the names.

Talk about having to include sub-editors or other non-writers is a red herring though it must be said that there is no shortage of share traders around many City subs' tables. As there are among executives far removed from the City section – as the *Mirror* proved.

But that problem too could be dealt with by the simple device of making all those employed by the City section record their share portfolios and dealings as well as those such as editors or executives who deal ahead of published tips from City staff.

The cry then goes up from the well-heeled inhabitants of the Street of Shame that this is an invasion of their privacy and right to freedom of expression. Well-paid City hacks also demand the right to be secret investors – now there's a campaign!

But those who so often deny such rights to others on the often completely spurious grounds of public interest have little merit on their side. Why should the newspaper reader or TV viewer be put at risk from greedy hacks lining their own pockets or failing to report bad news before selling?

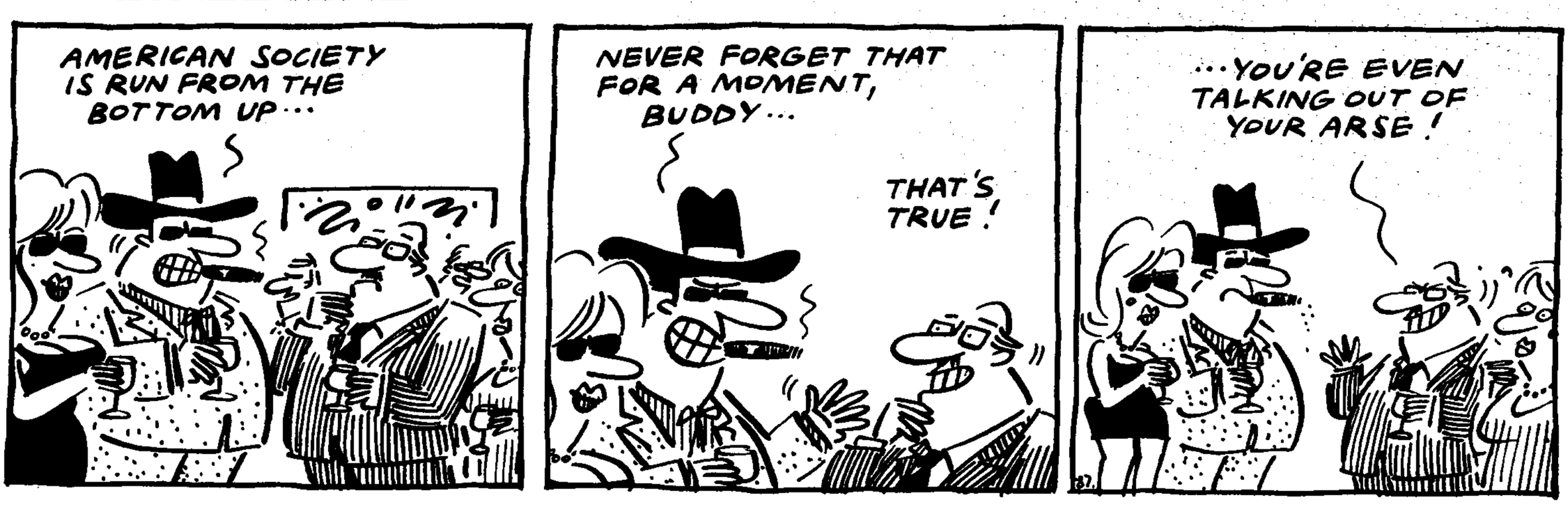
TV tips are a growth area with so many retired people with money to spare available to watch daytime programmes. Just who polices these programmes is less than clear. There have already been several examples of advance dealing ahead of TV share tips. These are put down to leaks – but leaked by who and why?

Of course there would be one simple way round all these problems. Financial hacks' shareholdings, which their employers assure us are all disclosed internally and above board, could be published on a regular basis in their own newspapers. That way just like with MPs, doctors and company directors the public could judge whether there are any conflicts of interest rather than relying on the toothless tiger of self interest and no regulation.

***'Slicker'***

## THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG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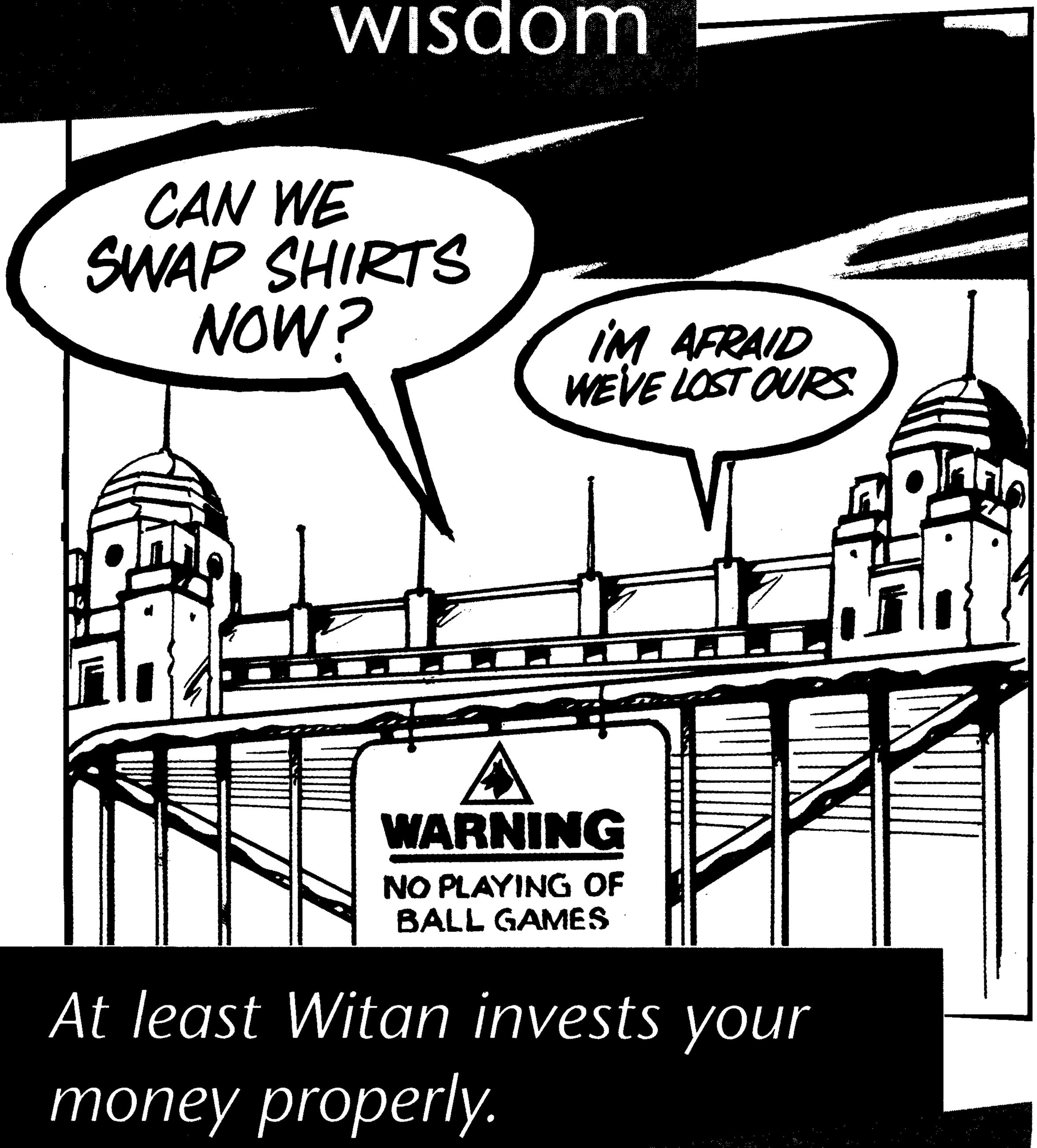
...YOU'RE EVEN TALKING OUT OF YOUR ARSE!

wisdom

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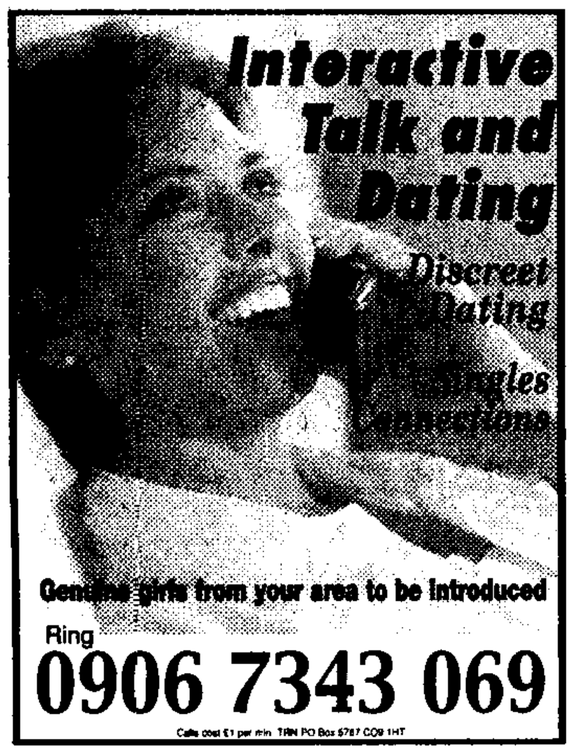


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**ATTRACTIVE,** almost handsome, single, slim, educated engineer, young 48, with artistic interests and humour intact, seeks unpretentious, professional independent woman. Attached ladies seeking discreet afternoon fun, please apply elsewhere. Box 0923.

**DIVORCED IN SURREY.** Late 40's, D.Moore lookalike (Dudley not Demi) Likes books, pubs, racing. Hates Irish Theme pubs, pseuds, but does have GSOH. Box 1123.

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**BEAUTIFUL BRAINY, BLONDE,** blue-eyed, 36 year old woman seeks unattached, intelligent, tall, 35-44 year old man for fun. London. Photo appreciated. Box 1223.

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**MALE,** considered attractive, young looking 48, medium build, reasonably fit, has challenging and interesting career, in happy but alas physically unfulfilling marriage, seeks interesting and fun lady as friend, confidante and discreet lover. London + S-East. Box 0623.

**RELAXED, SLIM, 6'** businessman own hair WLTM stimulating, attractive woman, 30-45. Central London. Photo please. Box 0223.

**ATHLETIC, IMAGINATIVE** graduate (32) seeks gymnastic Mrs Robinson; age immaterial – rsthree99@hotmail.com

**I'M NOT LIKE** everybody else (m) seeks same (f) to compare notes – likenobodyelse@hotmail.com or Box 0723.

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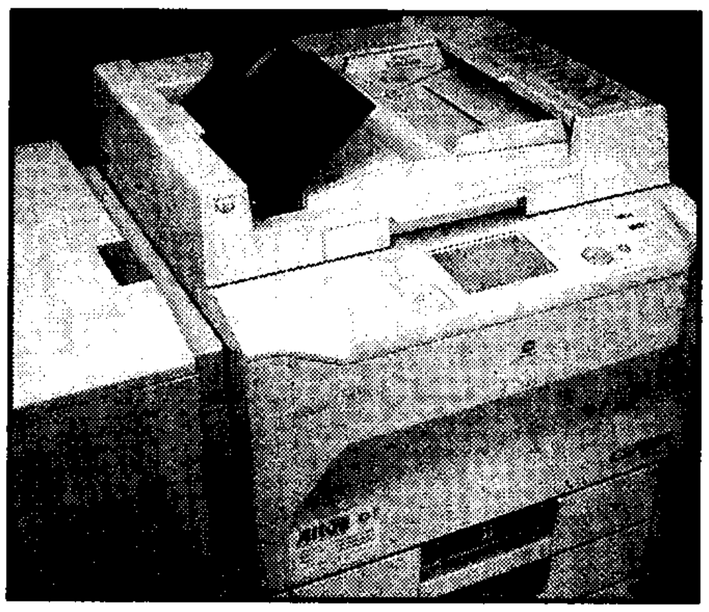

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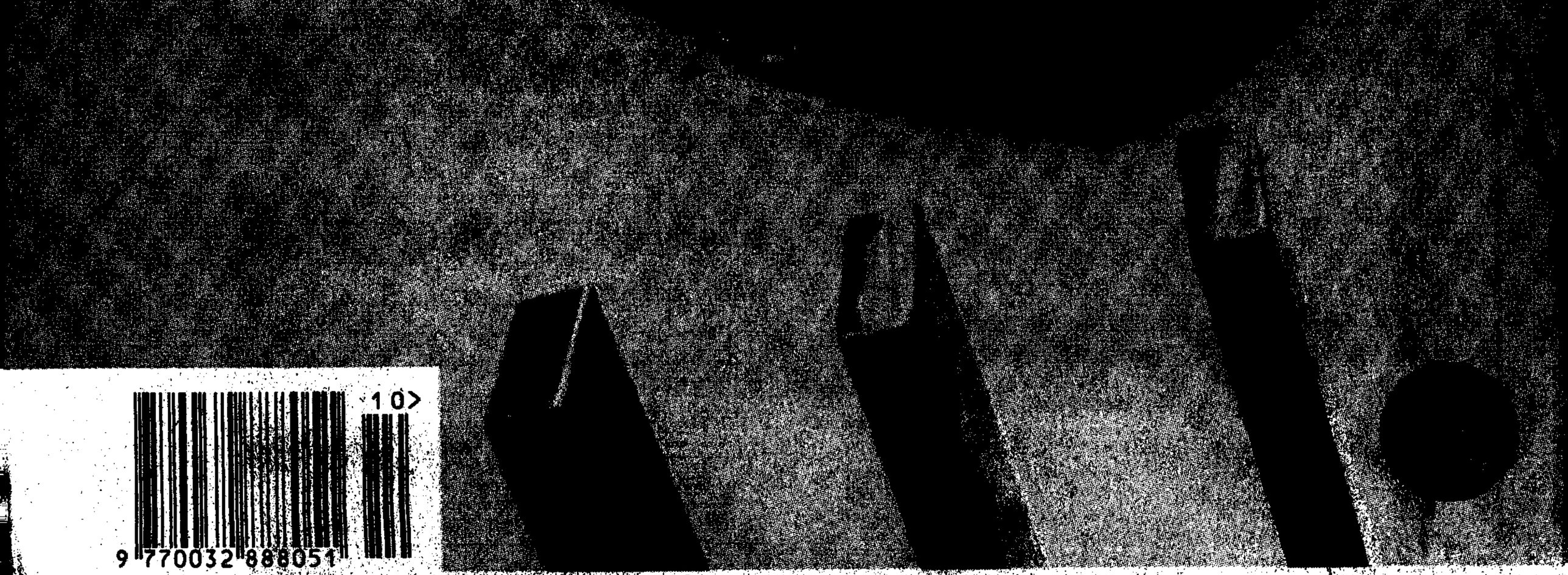

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